UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD CHAIR IN A PUBLIC COLLEGE

BY

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©

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE ROLE OF THE BOARD CHAIR IN A PUBLIC COLLEGE submitted by JAMES PATRICK RYAN in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Administration of Postsecondary Education.

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Date: Jan 26, 1998

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED WITH LOVE TO

MY WIFE AND OUR PRECIOUS DAUGHTER
GAETANA AND CATHRYN-ROSE

AND

MY MOTHER AND FATHER
CATHERINE AND LORNE

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of the board chair and president regarding the role of the board chair in a public college. The case method was used to address the research question. Data gathering consisted of interviews with three board chairs and two presidents in Alberta and a review of relevant documentation. Data were analysed deductively and inductively.

The findings were consistent with and supported the literature on the role of the board chair. Twelve conclusions were drawn based on the findings with several recommendations for practice and additional research. Thirteen recommendations focussed on the need for better preparation prior to becoming board chair and an ongoing pursuit to better understand this role. In addition, the need for strong supportive relationships between the board chair and the: (a) Minister, (b) other board chairs, and (c) executive assistant to the board were identified.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
1	Introduction to the Study	1
	Purpose of the Study	2
	Definition of Terms	3
	Assumptions	4
	Researcher's Beliefs	4
	Delimitations	5
	Limitations	6
	Significance of the Study	6
	Organization of Thesis	8
2	Review of the Literature	10
	Board Governance	10
	The Role of the Board Chair	13
	Role Theory and Perceptions	21
	Conceptual Framework	23
	Summary	26
3	Research Design and Method	29
	Research Design	29
	Sample and Population	30
	Ethical Considerations	31
	Pilot Study	31
	Data Collection Techniques	32
	Data Analysis Techniques	33
	Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability	34

CHAPTER PAGE

3 (Cont.) Summary ... 36

4 The Findings ... 38

Contextual Data One -- Participants' Backgrounds and Satisfaction With Their Roles ... 38

Contextual Data Two -- Appointment Process ... 40

Selection process of the board chair ... 41

Length of term in office ... 43

Contextual Data Three -- Role Descriptions ... 44

Learning of the board chair role ... 44

Role descriptions of the board chair ... 45

Presence of documented board chair roles ... 46

Theme One -- Preparation for the Position of Board Chair ... 48

Theme Two -- Nature of Relationships ... 50

Relationship between the board chair and the president ... 51

Relationship between the board chair and the board members ... 52

Relationship between the board chair and significant community members outside the college ... 54

Relationship between the board chair and the Minister ... 55

Relationship between the board chair and other board chairs ... 55

Relationship between the board chair and the executive assistant to the board chair ... 55

Theme Three -- Time Commitment of the Board Chair ... 56

CHAPTER PAGE

4 (Cont.) Discussion of Findings....57

Participants' backgrounds and satisfaction with their roles....57

Appointment process....58

Role descriptions....60

Preparation for the position of board chair....61

Nature of relationships....62

Additional relationships....64

Time commitment of the board chair....66

Summary....66

5 Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations....68

Overview of the Study....68

Summary of the Findings....70

Participants' backgrounds and satisfaction with their roles....70

Appointment process....71

Role descriptions....73

Theme one -- preparation for the position of board chair....74

Theme two -- nature of relationships....75

Theme three -- time commitment of the board chair....78

Conclusions....78

Recommendations....82

Practice....82

Research....85

CHAPTER PAGE

5 (Cont.) Implications 86

Expanded conceptual framework 87

Personal Reflections 89

References 91

Appendix -- Interview Schedule 94

Curriculum Vitae 98

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE PAGE

4.1 Pseudonyms for Study Participants and Colleges.....39

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
2.1	Conceptual Framework for Study	24
5.1	Expanded Conceptual Framework	88

Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

Public colleges are complex organizations governed by boards of governors. Governing boards in Alberta, and other provinces in Canada, are created through government legislation and are critical to the operation of public colleges. Boards are clearly intended, by both legislation and history, to represent the community of citizens to be served by the college. Further, there is a clear expectation by government that these boards will be responsible for the governance of the colleges (Dennison & Gallagher,1986). Public colleges are expected to have institutional autonomy within a framework of provincial legislation. This creates a college governance process which involves a delicate balance of authority and responsibility between institutional boards and the provincial governments.

College boards in Alberta are faced with an array of problems today that were not present several years ago. Colleges institutions have to do more with less -- more students and less money consequently, the need for effective board governance is critical. In most Canadian public colleges, governing boards are composed largely of lay persons, whose roles are to set policy and manage the affairs of the institution (Dennison,1995). Elford (1995) questions the effectiveness of governing lay boards in postsecondary institutions and whether they can deliver and act decisively or are they simply bureaucrats inhibiting astute leaders from accomplishing the necessary tasks. Kerr and Gade (1989) concluded that a system of lay boards of trustees serves higher education exceedingly well, warranting strong support, and agreed that no other alternative system would serve the long-run and overall interests of students,

faculty, alumni, and the public at large nearly so well.

Public college boards in Alberta are corporations established by order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Each board is composed of an academic and nonacademic staff member, seven community lay persons (eight at Lakeland College), one of whom one is designated as board chair, and the president of the college (Alberta,1996). Serving as a board member is increasingly a challenging "high-wire act" in a complex and demanding society that expects nothing less than excellence from its colleges. The pursuit of excellence and the extent to which a college achieves a degree of excellence is largely due to the overall relationship among the board members, board chair, and the president. Each member of the board must possess a clear understanding of his or her role, other board members' roles, and the overall role of the board. The quality of governance often depends on the skill of the chairing party who is responsible for the functioning of the board (Carver,1990). The role of the board chair in three Alberta public colleges was the focus of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions and gain personal insights of the board chair and president regarding the role of the board chair. This study was intended to: (a) contribute to the existing knowledge base; (b) assist in the development of practice and process for selection, training, and appointment of board chairs; and (c) provide a rich, meaningful job description for current and aspiring board chairs. Although much has been published concerning respective roles and responsibilities of the governing board and the president in managing the affairs of colleges, little attention has been given to

the role of the board chair. In order to address the research question posed, six specific sub-questions served as guides to the development of the study, namely, what are the perceptions held by the:

1. board chair of the role of the board chair?
2. president of the role of the board chair?
3. board chair of the relationship that exists between the board chair and the president?
4. president of the relationship that exists between the board chair and the president?
5. board chair of the relationship that exists between the board chair and the board members?
6. president of the relationship that exists between the board chair and the board members?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used in the study:

1. Governing board. A college board in Alberta, created through legislation (Alberta Colleges Act), which is the highest decision-making authority for the institution and is responsible for the continuing operations of the college and its long range development.

2. Board chair. A governing board's leader appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

3. President. The institution's chief executive officer who is appointed by the college board. The president is also a member of the college board.

4. Relationship. The state of being mutually connected with one another.

5. Role. Role is "the behavior expectations for what a person 'should' do

when occupying a position in a specific social setting" (Heis, 1981, p. 95). Role is used in this study to mean all observable actions of performances expected of the board chair.

6. Public College. A postsecondary educational institution in Alberta which is governed by the Alberta Colleges Act and offers a comprehensive range of courses and programs.

Assumptions

Throughout the study I was guided by the following assumptions:

1. The board chair held a key role in enhancing the relationship between the president and the board in order to achieve a degree of excellence within their educational institution.

2. All participants that were interviewed were aware of the role of the board chair.

3. All participants were able to accurately relate their own perceptions of and expectations for the role of the board chair.

4. The role of the board chair, at a public college, was clarified and described through the investigation of the perceptions held by two presidents and three board chairs.

5. In terms of the perceptions of the role of the board chair, the three public postsecondary colleges chosen for the study, were governed by the Alberta Colleges Act and were considered similar to the other eight postsecondary Alberta public colleges also governed by the Alberta Colleges Act.

Researcher's Beliefs

The role of a board chair in one public college may be different than the

role of a board chair in another public college in the province of Alberta. Public colleges in Alberta differ in operations and in the individuals who govern, however, I believed that the findings of the study would have some transferability to other public colleges. Public colleges in Alberta have strong governing legislation (Alberta Colleges Act) and board members are provided with a lengthy position description on the role of the board chair developed by the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. If this position description is followed at the board and board chair level then the perceptions of the board chairs and presidents, on the role of the board chair, should be very similar. Often though, a role is practiced based on its cultural past, expectations of others and one's own needs in the role which may result in role conflict, and role ambiguity (unclear and insufficient information as to what is expected about the role). I believed that the study would capture certain elements of role conflict and role ambiguity in relation to the role of the board chair, however as stated earlier, if the position description was followed at the board and board chair level then the perceptions of the role of the board chair should be quite similar. I now believe that the study captured little if any elements of role conflict and role ambiguity in relation to the role of the board chair and the position description was followed at the board and board chair level with perceptions of the role of the board chair being very similar.

Delimitations

The following delimitations concerning the study were noted:

1. The study was delimited to exploring the perceptions of three board chairs and two presidents in relation to the role of the board chair. Initially I intended to interview three board chairs and three presidents, however due to

unavoidable circumstances one president was not able to participate in the study.

2. The study was delimited to three public colleges in Alberta.

3. The study was delimited to interview method and document analysis.

Limitations

The following limitations concerning the study were noted:

1. The case study research design limited transferability to the role of board chairs in other Alberta colleges because of its reliance on a volunteer, purposive sampling technique. However, it can be argued that much of what was found from the study's participants is transferable to other Alberta public college board chairs who would exhibit the same characteristics and context as the participants.

2. The study may have been limited by the willingness of the participants to share their perceptions and attitudes on the role of the board chair with me.

3. Time constraints of participants may have limited me in gathering the necessary data for clarification on the role of the board chair. In addition, I was not able to carry out long-term observation activities being dependent only on participants' comments and documents for data.

Significance of the Study

Governing boards are instrumental in providing the degree of excellence that society at large expects from their college institutions. This pursuit towards excellence should bring the trustees and administrators together toward a common goal where excellence can only be achieved in a climate of mutual trust and respect between the board and the administration (O'Banion,1989). The relationship between the president of a public college and the board chair

is vital to the success of the governing board and the college. The role of the board chair in relation to the president and the board itself is one of the least understood areas of college governance and the importance of the board chair cannot be overemphasized (Tatum, 1985). The board chair is clearly the board's leader and server who should not be solely responsible for leading the organization but should assume the far more sensitive and demanding role in helping the board lead the organization (Carver,1997).

"The extent to which a college achieves a degree of excellence in accomplishing its mission and maintaining its academic integrity is due, in large measure, to the governance of the institution" (Cohen, Brawer, & Associates, 1994, p. 91). Although there is substantial literature on the topic of college board governance, Kerr and Gade (1989) reported that they could find "little useful literature" (p. 2) on the role of college boards in America. More recently, Elford (1995) concluded that this applies even more so to Canadian college governing boards.

The role of the board chair in Alberta public colleges in relation to the president and the board itself has not been well studied and the role is becoming more complex in a demanding society that expects nothing less than excellence from its college institutions. Moreover, the job is a volunteer position, which demands a great deal of commitment and expertise.

Given the paucity of the literature regarding the role of the board chair, it appears that there is little useful information on the perceived role of the board chair in a public college. Most of the literature discusses the importance of board-administration relations with little or no reference to board chairs. The literature which did have some relevance to the role of the board chair was

quite general with most references cited from American colleges. The literature included some Canadian content, but again this generally focussed on governing boards and board-administration relations.

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. The findings of the study will contribute theoretically to the existing knowledge base on the role of the board chair, in public colleges, particularly in the province of Alberta. An executive summary of the study's findings will be provided to the study participants and will be made available to all other public college board chairs in Alberta. In addition, the study findings have potential transferability to other public colleges in Alberta. From the perspective of practical significance, the results from the study will assist in the development of practice and process for selection, training and appointment of the board chair. Although the board chair is appointed solely by the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, the study suggested that the Minister does not parachute board chairs into this position and that recommendations, made by the governing board of the college, are seriously considered in the selection of the board chair. The study provided a rich--meaningful job description for current and aspiring board chairs in Alberta public post-secondary colleges. Board chairs, presidents, board members, and the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development may be more informed on the selection, training, and appointment of board chairs based on the study's findings. In addition, governing boards may also be more informed on the role of the board chair in an Alberta public college.

Organization of Thesis

Chapter One served to introduce the research purpose, question and

sub-questions, and significance of the study. As well, definitions of terms, basic assumptions, researcher beliefs, and delimitations and limitations of the study were presented. Chapter Two presents an overview of literature related to board governance, role of the board chair, role theory, and perceptions. In addition, Chapter Two provides the conceptual framework used to guide the study. Chapter Three outlines the research design and method including sample and population, ethical considerations, the pilot study and development of the interview schedule, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods. Chapter Four provides a report of the findings based on the interview data and written documentation that was provided to me. A discussion of these findings is then presented which relates these findings to the literature. Chapter Five begins with an overview of the study and a summary of the findings. Conclusions, recommendations and implications are then presented and the expanded conceptual framework closes this chapter.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature is divided into three sections. The first section describes the concept of board governance. The second section focuses on the role of the board chair. The third section reviews role theory, including the concept of perception.

Board Governance

An Alberta public college is created by the provincial government to achieve certain goals as defined by the government and the governing board's purpose is to respond to these goals, maintain a dialogue between the community served and the college institution, and secure and further the long-term well-being of the college institution (Wood,1991). An Alberta public college governing board is a corporation, which occupies an important position at the top of the institutional organization, and is established by order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council (Alberta,1996). A board is situated at the interface between the academic institution and the communal society providing a means for the community to exert some influences over the institution, but in a sensitive way respecting the conventions norms and values of the institution (Jones & Skolnik, 1995). Board members have an important expectation that they will act as trustees, interpreting and representing the public's interest in the college institution. Governance can be viewed from two perspectives -- external governance and internal governance. External governance includes arrangements, authorities, legislation, which determine policy and direction for public college systems; and internal governance is the system by which public colleges conduct their own affairs within a framework established by legislation

(Andrews, 1997). Both external and internal governance processes impact public college governing boards and are the directional and motivating forces behind them.

The board of governors of a public college, is established in legislation as the the ultimate governing and decision making body of the college. The legislation which governs public colleges in the province of Alberta is the Colleges Act. All other bodies, including the academic council and students' council of the college, are subject to the authority of the board of governors. The duties and powers of college governing boards of the 11 public colleges in Alberta, are specified in the legislation. The major functions of the board are to:

1. determine policies respecting the organization, administration, and operation of the college;

2. provide programs and courses of instruction;

3. appoint a president, who shall be the chief executive officer of the college, and prescribe his or her tenure of office and the remuneration to be paid;

4. ensure that the business and affairs of the college are conducted in accordance with the Alberta Colleges Act;

5. manage and control the college and its property, revenue, business and affairs.

Although governing boards play a central role in Canadian and American higher education, Kerr and Gade (1989) reported that they could find "little useful literature" (p. 2) on American governing boards. Elford (1995) concluded, in his review of board governance, that this observation would apply even more so to Canadian public college boards.

Elford (1995) explored the rationale for lay boards of governance in higher education and outlined the functions of the boards and structures within. Based on his literature review of lay boards, Elford stated that lay boards of governors exist because of long standing traditions, and that the complex institutional needs for direction and accountability are best provided by lay boards. Due to the lack of research on lay boards, Elford concluded that it is difficult to make solid conclusions on the effectiveness of lay boards and that additional research is needed. Elford identified six duties, five responsibilities, and two types of attitudes required in order for a board to perform well. The six duties were: (a) to appoint the president, (b) to approve the budget, (c) to raise money, (d) to manage the endowment, (e) to serve as court of last appeal, and (f) to make certain that the institution is well managed. The five responsibilities were: (a) to assure adequate physical facilities, (b) to oversee the educational program, (c) to approve long range plans, (d) to serve as bridge and buffer between campus and community, and (e) to preserve institutional autonomy. The two types of attitudes were: (a) to be informed and (b) to maintain the integrity of trust.

Over the years the financial constraints on postsecondary institutions in Canada and America have resulted in institutions having to do more with less. More students and less money with higher educational expectations from society and government has placed a large degree of accountability and responsibility on the shoulders of governing boards. Green and McDade (1991) identified that " the politicization of boards. . . has caused some boards to become an ideological battleground and has endangered presidential tenure and effectiveness. Sunshine laws, which require public institution's boards to

meet in open session, increased authority of system boards, and intrusion by legislature have diminished the effectiveness of boards" (p. 41). Kerr and Gade (1989) identified four trends in board governance: (a) increased role confusion for board members as they have shifted from "agent" of the state or church to a "buffer" and "bridge;" (b) a shift of power away from the board to faculty and students; (c) increased restriction on board autonomy by the actions of interest groups, courts, legislatures, "super boards" and the media; and (d) growth of multi-campus systems.

Governing boards are only as effective as their individual members. How board members conduct themselves in meetings, how they educate themselves and are educated by their leaders, how well they are led, and how well they are served by their chief executives and staffs are matters that should not be left to chance or to ad hoc attention (Carver,1997). Each public college governing board in Alberta is composed of an academic and nonacademic staff member, seven community lay persons (eight at Lakeland College) one of whom shall be designated as board chair, and the president of the college (Alberta,1996). Two individuals who bear most of the responsibility for the development of a board are the board chair and the president who is the chief executive officer of the college (Ingram & Associates,1993). Although the board chair bears specific responsibility with respect to the legislation, the entire board cannot avoid its share of responsibility. Total commitment by the board members is crucial. It is not a collection of individuals or committees but a group -- a single organizational position (Carver,1997).

The Role of the Board Chair

A good board chair is critical to good operations of the board and the

college. The role of the board chair is very important in college governance, however, in relation to the president and the board itself, the role is also one of the least understood areas of college governance (Tatum 1985). As this study explored the perceptions of college board chairs and presidents, it is appropriate now to discuss the related literature on the role of the board chair.

The Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development has developed a lengthy position description for the board chair in colleges and technical institutes which includes: (a) responsibilities, (b) qualifications required, and (c) terms and conditions of appointment (1994). The Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development describes the board chair as a leader of the board in governing the educational institution under its care, ensuring that appropriate board processes are in place, that the board-administration distinction is understood, that relations with government are maintained, and that the organization adheres to the purpose and vision established by the board. In addition, unlike the private sector, the board chair does not hold unique powers, but rather is "primer inter pares." As manifestation of this, the president reports to and takes direction from the board not the chair. There are some differences from one board to another, in keeping with special needs, character, and specific board adopted procedures of each educational institution. The role of the board chair also varies from one educational institution to the next, nevertheless, there are common responsibilities of the board chair position.

There are four responsibilities, that the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development has outlined, that a board chair must fulfil in this position. These four responsibilities fall into the following categories: (a)

board processes, (b) board-administration relations, (c) board structure, and (d) external and government relations. The main responsibilities of the board chair, in the board processes category, are:

1. leads the board in ensuring that the board focuses on the broader governance tasks, rather than becoming involved with day-to-day administrative activities;
2. leads the board in ensuring that the educational institution has a process to develop and maintain a direction and sense of vision, that the direction/vision is implemented and is communicated throughout the organization;
3. leads the board in ensuring that governing policies of the board are in place;
4. may set the agenda for board and special meetings;
5. works with the board secretary or the secretary to the board to ensure that minutes are taken, recorded, and circulated;
6. presides over all regular and special board meetings: manages agenda, participation, priority, and topics;
7. leads the board in ensuring that the board acts in a fiscally responsible fashion;
8. leads the board in deciding upon recommendations from academic council
9. leads the board in ensuring that the board conducts itself in an ethical manner;
10. ensures compliance with enabling statutes and the board's by-laws and policies;
11. may appoint the chairs of board committees;
12. may attend board committee meetings;
13. presides over meeting of the executive committee (where such is in place), and submits decisions for discussion and ratification at the next board meeting;
14. discuss matters that arise between board meetings with the president, vice-chair, and committee chairs;
15. addresses concerns raised by board members;
16. examines the strengths and weaknesses of board members, and recommends to the Minister potential new external board members;
17. continually helps the board members to learn and improve, both in board processes, and in the evolving issues associated with the institution and education as a whole;
18. leads the board in ensuring that the periodic reports required by legislation are prepared and submitted;
19. pays attention to board member attendance and participation

and takes action as appropriate. (Alberta Advanced Education & Career Development, 1994, pp. 1-2)

The main responsibilities of the board chair in the board-administration relations category are :

1. establishes and maintains a good working relationship with the president;
2. ensures that the distinction between board and administrative roles are understood and observed in board processes;
3. leads the presidential selection process, ensuring that the proper list of skill requirements has been developed;
4. leads the board in evaluating the President, and takes action as appropriate;
5. leads the board, or a committee charged with that responsibility, in determining the initial and annual compensation for the president and senior administration;
6. between board meetings, discusses board-related matters with the president, and informs the board as appropriate. (Alberta Advanced Education & Career Development, 1994, pp.2, 3)

The main responsibility of the board chair in the board structure category is to take "leadership in ensuring that the board has an effective organizational and committee structure" (Alberta Advanced Education & Career Development, 1994, p. 3).

The main responsibilities of the board chair in the external and government relations category are :

1. represents the institution to appropriate politicians at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels, as well as to other chairs at similar institutions;
2. listens to the stakeholders, and ensures that emerging issues are dealt with by the board;
3. represents the board in providing advice to the Minister with respect to:
   - provincial education policy
   - proposals and statements put forward by the Minister
   - policy changes

   and keeps the Minister informed about the development of the institution and its plans;

> 4. in addition, the chair maintains ongoing relationships with the chairs of other similar institutions, in order to examine cross-institutional issues. (Alberta Advanced Education & Career Development, 1994, p. 3)

The Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development requires candidates for the board chair position to possess certain qualifications. In order to be eligible to serve as board chair, a candidate must be a Canadian citizen or have been lawfully admitted to Canada for permanent residence, and be a resident of Alberta. The board chair should have a reasonable combination of the following skills and abilities :

> 1. an understanding of financial matters;
> 2. experience at a board or senior administrative level with complex organizations;
> 3. interpersonal abilities to deal with a large variety of stakeholders in order to develop consensus and negotiating positions;
> 4. communications skills:
> - ability to communicate ideas
> - ability to handle media
> - ability to articulate policy;
> 5. demonstrated interest in the educational institution and other educational institutions in the province and awareness of issues affecting education and training of adults;
> 6. demonstrated community service. (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994, pp. 3-4)

The Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development has developed specific terms and conditions for the board chair position (1994). The board chair is appointed for a term of up to three years with the possibility of being redesignated for one further term, for a maximum of six years service. The remuneration varies depending upon the educational institution. All board chairs are paid travelling and living expenses incurred in the course of their duties. Honoraria are paid, which in some cases are donated back to the

educational institution.

The Illinois Community College Trustees Association has developed six areas of responsibility for the board chair which include: (a) the board chair as presider over board meetings; (b) the board chair as counsellor and coach for the president; (c) the board chair as educator for new board members; (d) the board chair as mediator for inappropriate board member behavior; (e) the board chair leadership over the institution's commitment to planning; and (f) the board chair as evaluator over his or her own performance (1990).

Hamilton and Hartstein (1985) insisted that the most important role of the board chair is to communicate tactfully with the entire board in order to resolve problems and to maintain good working relationships. Lardner (1985) discussed the importance of leadership and leadership styles that a board chair may employ. The chair of a community college governing board should be the go-between, the interlocutor. The board chair must mediate not only among board members but among students, staff, faculty, and administrators. The board chair needs to contain conflict in a "cool," calm, and firm manner and steer opposing parties towards outcomes that are in the best interest of the institution. This directed effort by the board chair must be done in a supportive -- considerate approach in order for the board chair's leadership to be most productive (Lardner, 1985).

According to Ingram and Associates (1993) the relationship between the president and the board chair is vital to how well the governing board will perform. The synergy between these two individuals can make possible what neither individual could accomplish. The board chair has four major responsibilities that he or she must fulfill in the institution (Ingram & Associates,

1993): (a) being knowledgeable and having a command of the information that is pertinent in governing a college institution; (b) constant communication with the president discussing the board's progress in meeting its responsibilities and having a key role in orientation of new board members; (c) speak for the board by explaining, defending, or advocating for a variety of board deliberations, decision, or institutional actions; and (d) be the board's conscience and disciplinarian. The board chair sets the moral, ethical, and legal tone for the entire board through personal example and being the board's conscience.

Carver (1997) states that "as the chairperson of the board, your role, on behalf of the board, is to protect and further the integrity of governance and to make the best contribution to your organization and take on the role as servant-leader to the board" (p. 1). The board chair and his or her relationship with the board and the president is crucial to the success of the organization and must be philosophically grounded in two areas. The first area is that the seat of governance integrity begins with the board, not with the chairperson, as must the seat of governance authority. The board's job must be formulated first, and only then can the chairperson's role be derived. In the board-chairperson dyad, the board must unambiguously be the superior, the chairperson, the servant. The second area is that the chairperson, his or her role having been derived from and therefore secondary to the board's job, is charged to lead a process in which high-performance governance is the product. The chairperson not only guides the governance process but is empowered to make certain decisions and is the board leader. In addition, Carver points out in his policy governance model that the chairperson inherits the task of making smaller decisions about the board's job as events unfold and that you have this authority, however, only

as long as you act in a manner consistent with what the board has already stated. How a chairperson carries out his or her role is largely due to the success of the board and that a chairperson should lead individuals to become a leadership group. Members of the board should never assume that they can relax their group responsibility because the chairperson has saved them from it. Carver notes the following tips for chairing more effectively:

1. be the chairperson, not an intermittent CEO (Chief Executive Officer);
2. lead the board, not the CEO;
3. lead the board to define its own job;
4. lead the board to design its discipline;
5. lead the board to evaluate its performance;
6. take responsibility for the agenda;
7. run participative but efficient meetings;
8. take the long view -- build capability.

In addition to the above literature on the role of the board chair, Keyano College has developed a board of governors handbook which outlines the role of their board chair (1995). The board chair must: (a) control board meetings; (b) ensure all members are involved in discussions and decisions; (c) involve all board members in committees; (d) maintain positive relations with the president and board members; (e) preside at all regular and special meetings of the board; (f) act as official spokesman for the board; (g) be an ex-officio member of all board committees; (h) represent the board at all official functions sponsored by the board or at functions at which the board is to be formally represented; (i) attend Council of Board Chairmen meetings as required; (j) attend Keyano College Foundation Executive Committee meetings as

required; and (k) counsel and support administrative decisions and interpretations of policies.

In conclusion, board-administrator relations are at the leading edge of creating a climate of quality in a public college. The pursuit of excellence should bring the public board members and administrators to want each other to be the best, mutually serving a college that aims to be the best. The board chair plays a critical role in ensuring that board teamwork depends on a willingness to share power, trust, and open communications. He or she sets the moral, ethical, and legal tone for the entire board through personal example and by being its conscience (Ingram & Associates, 1993).

Role Theory and Perceptions

Role theory describes how behavior stems from the positions that individuals occupy in the systems of which they are part and the expectations held for occupants of such positions (Gross, Mason, & McEachern, 1958). Variables considered in role theory include the way an individual views the expectations he or she must meet because of occupying a position (Newcomb, 1950), the expectations others have for position occupants (Gross, Mason, & McEachern, 1958), and the kinds of ambiguity (Farber, 1983; Landy & Trumbo, 1980) or conflict (Getzels, Lipham, & Campbell, 1968; Gross, Mason & McEachern, 1958; Farber, 1983) that can arise among sets of positions.

An organizational member's role set consists of all those individuals and groups who are associated with that role in the organization. An individual's role set is dependent in some way upon his or her performance and, therefore, role set members develop expectations about the way in which the individual should perform his or her role. Social systems theory views role conflict as "the

mutual interference of parts, actions, and reactions in a social system" (Getzels, Lipham, & Campbell,1968, p. 108). In this context, conflict may result between roles, between a person's needs and the expectations held for him or her by others, or among several persons holding expectations for a role. Role conflict may also occur when there is a lack of agreement among various groups and persons who hold expectations for the behavior of the individual occupying a particular position. Farber stated that role conflict occurs "when inconsistent, incompatible, or inappropriate demands are placed upon an individual" (1983, p. 6). Role ambiguity, a type of role conflict, results from unclear and insufficient information as to what is expected regarding a particular position. Farber noted that "role ambiguity is associated with a lack of clarity regarding worker's rights, responsibilities, methods, goals, status, or accountability" (1983, p. 6).

One of the most important, but least understood, areas in college governance is the role of the board chair in relation to the president and board members (Tatum, 1985). Sherman believed that there seems to be a cultural inertia that keeps the board -- president relationship at each college institution the same through time (1993). Educating new board members becomes a process of prescribing a role that has not changed for years. It becomes clear that boards must reevaluate these roles of board chair, president, and board members separately, so that the relationship of these roles will enhance the college institution's effectiveness for the good of the community and the students served (Sherman, 1993). Carver believed that perhaps most boards have not consciously defined their job and as a result a board does not know what it is about (1990). Once a board knows what it is all about, it is possible to

define the role of the president and the board chair (Carver, 1990).

This study was based upon perceptions of the board chair and president regarding the role of the board chair. It is appropriate, therefore, to comment briefly on the current literature regarding perception. Perceptions are extremely critical determinants of behavior in organizational settings such as colleges. A very straightforward and well accepted definition of perception is "the understanding of the world that you construct from data obtained through your senses (Shaver, 1981, p. 83). Johns (1988) takes this one step further stating "perception involves interpreting the input from our senses to provide meaning to our environment" (p. 91).

Many factors affect perceptions from difficulties consciously recognizing and verbally expressing oneself to one's own personal quality. Accurate perceptual evaluations of a board chair's behavior certainly is difficult. The quality of perceptual data depends upon the ability of respondents to identify and express their perception, the accuracy with which they perceive circumstances, and the extent to which a variety of perceptual biases intervene in the perception process (Hochberg, 1978; Wrightsman, 1977).

Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual framework in Figure 2.1. was developed from this literature review to guide this study. At the bottom of this conceptual framework in figure 2.1, lies the board role. Until the board's job is formulated first, only then can the chairperson's role be derived (Carver, 1997). The board's role is determined by external and internal governance. External governance includes arrangements, authorities, legislation, which determine policy and direction for public college systems, and internal governance is the

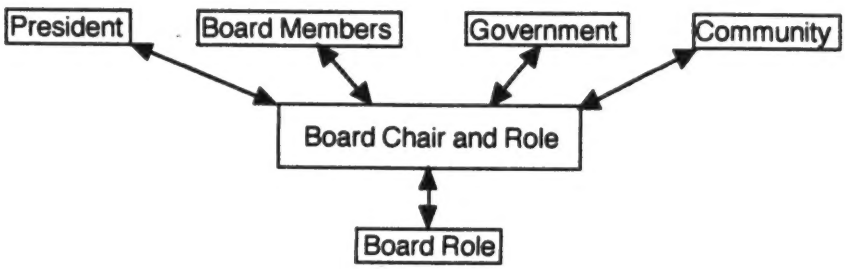

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework for Study

system by which public colleges conduct their own affairs within a framework established by legislation (Andrews, 1997). Internal governance is determined largely by the members who make up the board. In order to achieve successful internal board governance all board members should possess positive interpersonal skills in relating to one another and a commitment in sharing together the responsibility of governing the college institution (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994). Once the role of the governing board has been determined then the board chair's role can be derived.

The board chair and his or her role is determined by the board, however the way in which a board chair performs in this role depends on the personal qualities of the individual who occupies the role (Ingram & Associates, 1993). The board chair should posses very good interpersonal skills in order to maintain positive, open, trusting relations with all members of the board. The board chair impacts the role of the board by being a servant -- leader to the board and ensures that all board members become actively involved in board

governance (Carver, 1997).

A positive, strong, trusting, and open relationship between the board chair and the president is critical in the success of the governing board (Ingram & Associates, 1993). In addition, it is extremely important that the above interpersonal qualities be firmly rooted in relations between the board chair and other members of the board.

Positive open relationships between the board chair and government should exist in order to achieve successful board governance. The board chair is a representative of the institution to appropriate politicians at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels as well to other chairs at similar institutions (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994). In addition, the board chair should keep the Minister informed about the development of the institution and its plans.

An open, strong, trusting relationship between the board chair and the community should exist in order for the success of the institution and the governing board (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994). The board chair's interpersonal abilities to listen to college stakeholders and deal with them, in order to develop consensus and negotiating positions, are extremely important skills to possess.

The arrows, which connect the boxes together in figure 2.1, represent reciprocal relationships that are two-way. In order for a governing board to be successful in establishing an institution which provides excellence; positive, open, trusting reciprocal relationships, between the board chair and all other players, should be practiced.

Summary

The first section of the literature review discussed board governance and its important impact on the success of colleges. Public college governing boards, in Alberta, are corporations responsible for the overall management of their educational institutional organizations, and are established by order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The purpose of public college governing boards is to respond to goals set out by the government of Alberta and oversee that their colleges achieve these goals. The board of governors in an Alberta public college is established in legislation, the Alberta Colleges Act, as the ultimate decision making body of the college. Duties and powers of a board vary somewhat from one board to another but generally are empowered by legislation to: determine policies; provide programs and courses of instruction; appoint the president; ensure that the business and affairs of the college are conducted in accordance with the Alberta Colleges Act; and manage and control the college and it's property, revenue, business, and affairs. Lay boards and their role in effective governance was questioned by Elford (1995) and difficulties in board administration relations were identified along with government and societal challenges and pressures, to do more with less. The importance of board wholeness and board responsibility concluded this section.

The second section reviewed literature related to the role of the board chair. The role of the board chair is complex and marked with some ambiguity and conflict. The Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development (1994) describes the lengthy job position description on the role of the board chair in a public college in Alberta identifying responsibilities, qualifications required, and terms and conditions of appointment. The board

chair is described as a key figure in relation to the president and the board. The role and functions of the board chair vary from one writer to another. However there are three common themes among the writers with regard to the role of the board chair. These common themes are: (a) be the servant-leader to the board, (b) maintain positive relations with the president and board members, and (c) act as official spokesperson for the board and represent the board and educational institution appropriately.

In the third section role theory noted that behavior is motivated by our perception of ourselves, the world around us, and of humankind. It is in the capacity of participants to identify and express their perceptions which will determine the quality of perceptual data. Behavior arises from positions that we as individuals occupy and the expectations held for occupants of such positions. Differences arise depending on how an individual perceives his or her own expectations, coupled with expectations of others, in occupying a position. This leads to ambiguity and conflict regarding the behavior of this role. Often there seems to be a cultural inertia that keeps the board--president relationship, at each community college, the same through time. The role of the board chair in relation to the president and board members is an area that needs to be reevaluated. Once a board's role is defined, it is then possible to define the role of its board chair.

The last section discusses the conceptual framework which helped guide the study. This conceptual framework identified the relationship of the governing board and board chair and their strong interdependence on one another. In addition it identified the relationships between the board chair and the president, the board chair and board members, the board chair and the

community, and the board chair and the Government.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Method

This chapter identifies the research design and method, the sample and population, and ethical considerations. The pilot study is described briefly and a description of data collection and data analysis techniques is presented. A brief discussion of the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study's findings concludes this chapter.

Research Design

The case study was used to address the research question. I chose to use the case study method because I wanted to gain an in-depth comprehensive understanding of the perceptions that the board chair and the president had, regarding the role of the board chair in Alberta public colleges. The research was qualitative and descriptive in nature. Participants were chosen from three selected Alberta public colleges. Data were collected in two ways: (a) interviews and (b) a review of relevant documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the board chairs and presidents of the selected colleges. The semi-structured approach allowed for comparable information to be gathered from each of the participants while simultaneously allowing for deviation from the format when a participant had relevant information that went beyond the scope of the predetermined questions. As this study dealt with perceptions, it was decided that the depth of information required would best be accessed through the use of interviews. The interview situation usually permits much greater depth than other research data collection methods (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). These semi-structured interviews were guided in part by participants' responses. This type of interview was

chosen as it "has the advantage of providing reasonably standard data across respondents, but of greater depth that can be obtained from a structured interview" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 310). The interview questions used in this study are provided in Appendix A.

Sample and Population

There are 11 community public colleges in Alberta. The sample comprised three board chairs and two presidents from three public colleges in Alberta which were governed by the Alberta Colleges Act . The three colleges, chosen for the study, were given the pseudonyms Apple, Orange, and Pear. The three board chairs and two presidents, chosen for the study, were given the pseudonyms Gala and McIntosh for Apple College, Mandarin for Orange College, and Bartlett and Anjou for Pear College. I had intended to interview three presidents, however one president was unable to be interviewed due to unavoidable circumstances.

Purposeful sampling was employed as the sampling logic in the study. The extensive interviews conducted, with the participants, provided an "information rich" in-depth understanding of the role of the board chair in three Alberta public colleges, which were based on the perceptions of three selected board chairs and two selected presidents. This "information rich" data gathered on the role of the board chair will be shared with the reader in chapter four. The sample was selected based on the following criteria: (a) willingness of board chairs and presidents to be involved in the study; (b) my accessibility to the board chairs and presidents which was limited to time, driving distance, and costs; and (c) advice from an expert in the field (my supervisor).

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from a University of Alberta Ethics Review Committee on the proposed research study which included the pilot study. Confidentiality of the colleges, board chairs and presidents were assured by the researcher. Pseudonyms for colleges, board chairs, and presidents were used throughout the study and descriptive information about each college and participants were kept to a minimum in order to prevent recognition of colleges and participants by readers.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in early 1997 to test the interview schedule, method of data collection, and method of data analysis. The pilot study was an extremely useful tool in the preparation of the main research study and I benefited greatly from the experience gained through the pilot study's research process. It provided me with an opportunity to strengthen my interviewing skills in order to enhance the neutrality -- confirmability of the main study reducing the effects of my biases, motivations, interests, and perspectives. During the first interview it became obvious, although initial interview questions were open-ended and essential, that I was leading the participant to consider one reply to be more desirable than another due to follow up questions that were more closed than open ended. I realized that I was completing sentences and thoughts for the participants which were often different than that of the participant when he or she replied. During the second interview I had made changes to my interviewing style by allowing for more open ended responses and developing the active listening skills by allowing the participant an adequate amount of time to respond to questions. Both of these difficulties,

present during my pilot study, proved very helpful during the interviews for the main study. Valuable feedback was obtained after the interview from the pilot study's participants on the appropriateness of interview questions. This feedback assisted in some development and minor modifications to the interview schedule.

The pilot study investigated the perceptions of one board chair and one president, from a college in Alberta, regarding the role of the board chair. This college was a private college and not governed by the Alberta Colleges Act, however this college did have a similar governing board structure to that of public college governing boards in Alberta. One interview was conducted with the board chair and another, separate interview was conducted with the president of the college.

The pilot study proved to be a very valuable tool in allowing me to find errors and weaknesses in method and in the modification of the interview schedule for use in the main study. Very few throw-away questions were used in the pilot study and no throw-away questions were used in the main study due to the limited time the participants had to share with me. For the main study, one question in the pilot study interview schedule was omitted because it was addressed in other areas of the interview schedule and did not provide any relevant information pertinent to the research question. The essential questions used in the pilot study interview schedule provided a generous amount of data pertinent to the research question and sub-questions.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected in two ways: (a) interviews and (b) a review of relevant documentation. Independent interviews were conducted with each of

the five participants. The five interviews were conducted in the month of May,1997. The interviews were audio taped, with permission, transcribed into a computer file, and then printed onto paper as transcripts. Each interview lasted no longer than one hour. Each participant had the opportunity to review, confirm, or revise their transcript, however all participants felt comfortable with their initial responses thus the participants' need to review, confirm, or revise was not necessary. I was very satisfied with participant responses and, after careful analysis of the transcription had no further questions for the participants.

The review of documents included, the board of governors' handbooks and current minutes from the last board meetings in the three selected colleges, the Alberta Colleges Act, and the role documents from Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development.

All quotes cited, where appropriate, have been edited for grammar and readability and care was taken to ensure that there was no distortion in meaning.

Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis of the data involved three processes. The first process involved reading the documentation given to me by the participants in each of the three public colleges. This documentation consisted of governing board manuals and minutes from recent board meetings.

The second process involved listening to the audio taped interviews several times to facilitate a deeper understanding of the participants' responses. The audio taped interviews were then transcribed to paper format. These transcriptions were then read several times in order to begin searching for categories of contextual data and emergent themes. My journal, which had

captured my thoughts immediately after the interviews, was also visited frequently during data analysis, reacquainting me with the context in which the data were collected. Open coding was used with an emphasis on open enquiry, however my research question and sub-questions were part of this process.

The third process of data analysis involved analysing interview transcripts and my journal using an axial coding process which generated three categories of contextual data and three general themes. The transcripts from the interviews were analysed and coded using the process of open coding followed by axial coding breaking them into contextual data and themes. In general, the contextual data and themes supported the interview schedule through a deductive approach. An inductive process was used initially to identify emergent themes in the interviews. Subsequently, certain concepts, themes, and sub-themes emerged that were different from the previous deductive categories of the interview schedule. In addition, new ideas and concepts emerged as the transcripts, interview journal, and related documentation were reviewed. I described and interpreted the narratives of the participants and themes that emerged based on their perceptions.

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

The predominant data sources in the study were three board chairs and two presidents, and their perceptions on the role of the board chair in their college. Accurate perceptual evaluation of a board chair's behavior is difficult. The quality of perceptual data depends upon the ability of the participants to identify and express their perception, the accuracy with which they perceive circumstances and the extent to which a variety of perceptual biases intervene

in the perception process (Hochberg, 1978; Wrightsman, 1977). By using two data sources (board chairs and presidents) verifying the role of the board chair, and two types of data collection (interviews and a review of relevant documentation), triangulation occurred increasing the credibility of the study's findings.

Generalizability of the study's findings to other postsecondary colleges in Alberta is quite limited because of its reliance on a volunteer, purposive sampling technique. However, the findings from this study do have potential transferability to the role of board chairs in other Alberta public colleges in that the population of board chairs and governing boards of Alberta public colleges, which have legislation through the Alberta Colleges Act, should be relatively similar in characteristics and context as the sample in this study.

Dependability of the interview implementation posed a threat in that I may have led the participants to answer what I wanted to hear. Interview questions were predominantly open-ended essential questions and as it was imperative to ensure understanding to the participants' meaning of key concepts, participants were asked to clarify or elaborate on statements. Many probing questions were used such as: "What do you mean by...?" and "Can you tell me a bit more about...?" to help clarify or elaborate. However, I carefully selected essential questions which were focussed, to the point, and solicited generous responses. Participants may have wanted to please me by hypothesis guessing and they may also have wanted to be seen in a positive light--evaluation apprehension. Triangulation, however, did help to minimize these threats. Participants were also allowed as much time as they required to answer fully each question.

I attempted, to the best of my capacity, to establish a high degree of confirmability minimizing the effects of my beliefs from impacting the study's data and the analysis of those data. This was checked continuously by cross referencing -- obtaining verification and feedback from board chairs' and presidents' perceptions regarding the role of the board chair, reviewing relevant documentation (e.g., board of governors handbook), having an another person (my wife) review and provide feedback, and by seeking support from my supervisor and other members of my supervisory committee. In addition, the valuable experience in piloting my interview schedule strengthened my interviewing skills establishing a high degree of confirmability to which the findings of this study were determined by the participants rather than by my beliefs.

Summary

This chapter began by revisiting the research question and describing the research as qualitative using the case study methodology. The sample of three Alberta public colleges and the population of 11 Alberta colleges was described along with the use of purposeful sampling. Ethical considerations were discussed next confirming that all information shared would be confidential and the anonymity of participants and colleges would be assured using pseudonyms. The pilot study allowed for testing of the interview questions, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques. The pilot study strengthened and enhanced the final research study. In addition to interviews, documentary data was also gathered. The use of interviews as a data collection technique was chosen because of the in-depth and generous responses that the research question and sub-questions required. Data

analysis techniques were then outlined including finding support for deductive themes and inductive themes that surfaced after careful analysis of interview transcripts, relative documentation, and my interview journal. A discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the study's findings in relation to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability concluded this chapter.

Chapter Four

The Findings

This chapter focusses on reporting the findings of the interview data gathered from the five participants in this study and a discussion of these findings which relates the findings to the literature reviewed. The findings are reported according to contextual data and emergent themes derived from the questions asked through the interview schedule of this study. The description of the context is organized according to participants' backgrounds and satisfaction with their roles, appointment process, and job descriptions. Preparation for the position of board chair, nature of relationships, and time commitment make up the emergent themes. Three sub-themes emerged inductively from the data that were independent of the sub-questions; these sub-themes are addressed, in this chapter, under the relationships theme. Specific documentation from college governing board manuals and board minute meetings were provided to me, by the participants, for support of these contextual data and themes.

Contextual Data One -- Participants' Backgrounds and Satisfaction With Their Roles

Prior to interviewing the five participants of this study, it became important for me to assign pseudonyms to the participants and their respective colleges. This was done to ensure that comments and patterns of responses were easily attributable to the correct participant and their college. Table 1, on the next page, provides a listing of participants, their role position, and their college. It should be noted that the three colleges have been given the names of three fruit varieties, and that the participants of each college respectively, have been given specific names that describe each variety of fruit.

Table 4.1

Pseudonyms for Study Participants and Colleges

Participants	Role Position	College
Gala	Board Chair	Apple College
MacIntosh	President	Apple College
Mandarin	Board Chair	Orange College
Bartlett	Board Chair	Pear College
Anjou	President	Pear College

I felt that it was necessary to gather some data on the background of participants which provided a context for many of their responses. Gala the board chair of Apple College, at the time of the interview, had occupied this position for approximately two and one half years and gladly stated, when asked, that she would accept an extension to her term if available. Gala's long interest with the college, being on other boards outside the college, and her strong belief " that if we believe in the future of our society, education is the one investment we can make that guarantees that future," had attracted her initially in taking on this role.

MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, had occupied this position for four months and three weeks. He stated that he loved his job and was thoroughly enjoying this exciting opportunity. When asked if he would like to be the board chair, he replied, "No, I have a different role than that of the board chair and I love my role as president."

Mandarin, the board chair of Orange College, had occupied this position for two years and had been a board member of Orange College for six years.

This was his second term as board chair and if a third extension was possible he would definitely accept it. Mandarin was attracted to this type of job due to his experience of being on other boards, wanting to get involved in postsecondary education, and an allegiance he had to this college while his children attended. He enjoyed his role as board chair and stated, "I am going to miss it very much when my second term has ended. A board chair's term is three years maximum, however a board chair may be reappointed a second term as in my case." The president of Orange College was not able to be interviewed due to unavoidable circumstances.

Bartlett, the board chair of Pear College, had occupied this position for approximately six months and was attracted to this position due to her previous association with the college serving as a board member for three years. She found the experience of being a board member "exciting and stimulating" and was encouraged to apply to the position of board chair by other board members. When asked if Bartlett would accept a second term in this role, she said, " It's hard to say right now being so new in my three year term, but based on my experience so far I would."

Anjou, the president of Pear College, had occupied this position for just under two years and had been in postsecondary education in five colleges in numerous senior administration capacities. When asked if Anjou would like to be the board chair, he replied, " I enjoy my job very much and once my formal career is over I would give something back to the system, possibly volunteering, as a college board chair."

Contextual Data Two -- Appointment Process

The appointment process was divided into two sub-categories of

contextual data. These two sub-categories were selection process of the board chair and length of term of office.

Selection process of the board chair. According to Gala, the board chair of Apple College, the selection process of the board chair at Apple College was derived from a nominating committee of the board, and those who were interested put their names forth to the nominating committee which was then forwarded to the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. Individuals outside of Apple College had the opportunity to apply for this position as well. The Minister then did interviewing based on a short list and made his recommendation to cabinet. Gala stated she was generally happy with this appointment process, however emphasized that the appointment process should "never become too political -- it should not be done for political advantage or reasons."

MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, due to his short tenure to date, did not provide any comment on the selection process of the board chair at Apple College.

Mandarin, the board chair of Orange College, said that the appointment process for the board chair has changed recently, with the last two Ministers being very receptive in allowing board members to recommend a board chair candidate to the Minister for approval and recommendation to cabinet. Mandarin told me that he was very happy with this process because it gives the board a chance to recommend to the Minister a board chair who they know and can work with. In addition, Mandarin stated that this opportunity to recommend a board chair to the Minister reduces the possibility of an "outsider" being parachuted in as the board chair."

Bartlett, the board chair of Pear College, reported that the appointment process of the board chair at Pear College was very open. The position was advertised in the major newspapers, in the surrounding area, by the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development open to anyone from the public. Pear College set up a nominating committee which in turn, after all the applications reached the department's office, had an opportunity to review and make recommendation to the Minister. Bartlett said "the recommendation from Pear College was that I be the board chair and the recommendation of the department was the same." Bartlett reported that she was very happy with this process and liked the openness of appointment. She said, "I like to see things based more on credentials rather than on political connections."

Anjou, the president of Pear College, reported that the selection process of the board chair is an excellent process and he stands behind it. He stated, "it was now a more formalized process where there is open invitation to people to apply on being a board chair against criteria that was developed by the board and then long listed by the Ministry's Human Resource Department against that boards' criteria." After this, the board of the institution went on to derive a short list of acceptable names for submission to the Minister for final approval and recommendation to Cabinet.

Documentation was provided to me from Orange College in their Board of Governors Bylaw Manual. The board guidelines section of this manual provided a three page document, prepared by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development Legislative Services Branch, dated February 4th, 1994. This document, entitled *Advanced Education and Career Development Board*

Chair Appointment Process -- Institutions , included a notice of vacancy which stated that the Ministry will place annually a generic advertisement in Alberta newspapers identifying board chair positions coming open and invites all applications be sent to the Human Resource Department. In addition, the Minister will invite the affected institutions to publish, in any of their newspapers, a notice of vacancy 120 days before the term of the chair expires and to submit all applications received to the Human Resources Department. The Minister also will invite the board chair and members of the relevant board to bring forth nominations.

The screening process of these board chair applications is done by department Human Resource staff, with the advice and assistance of the Public Service Commissioner. All applications and nominations are screened against the position description. In addition, a sub-committee of the relevant board will be invited, in camera, to review all applications and nominations. This sub-committee is made up of the current board chair or designate, the president, two current public members of the board, and a student member of the board. This subcommittee then reviews and confirms all applications and may prioritise or rank candidates and may indicate special needs or criteria they may have for the position. The Minister solely selects those candidates who have been confirmed and prioritised by the subcommittee and will conduct whatever other processes he determines necessary to identify the successful candidate. The Minister then recommends that person to Cabinet for a final decision.

Length of term of office. Documentation was provided to me from Orange College in their Board of Governors Bylaw Manual in the board guidelines section. This four page document, entitled *Position Description:*

Board Chair, Colleges, and Technical Institutes, was from the Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development Legislative Services Branch, dated February 4th, 1994. This document reported that the board chair is appointed for a term of up to three years; who then may be redesignated for one further term, for a maximum of six years.

Four out of the five participants in the study felt that three years as a board chair with a possible three year maximum reappointment was an appropriate length of term to serve. Mandarin, the board chair from Orange College, reported that he would prefer that each board chair term be only two years for a maximum of four years possible. He stated that three years was too long a term and that "if a board chair was not working well with the others it should be open and I think two years is long enough." All participants stressed that in most circumstances a board chair should have previous experience as a board member from preferably the same college board or another board with a similar governing structure.

Contextual Data Three -- Role Descriptions

How a person learns the board chair role, role descriptions of the board chair, and presence of documented board chair roles were three sub-categories of role description contextual data that emerged from the interviews and documentary analysis data.

Learning of the board chair role. According to all participants, board chairs learn the role first and foremost from life experiences such as having served on previous boards. Gala, the board chair of Apple College, reported that usually the board chair of a public college in Alberta has served on that particular board as a board member before becoming appointed as board chair.

Two out of the three board chairs had served on their boards as board members. As board members on previous boards, all three board chairs, interviewed in this study, stated that their experience observing and working with their board chair was a very beneficial learning process. In addition, all participants informed me that their board had a board orientation process in place which would have been beneficial in assisting previous board members, who are now board chairs, in understanding the governance of their college and the role of the board chair.

Role descriptions of the board chair. Four out of five participants, at the time of these interviews, provided data on the role descriptions of the board chair.

MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, thought the board chair was responsible for chairing all of the board activities in addition to board meetings, the overseeing of the appointment of new members to the board, and giving direction and leadership to the board with respect to setting the vision and some of the goals and objectives for the college. In addition, the board chair has to be seen in the community as the spokesperson for the college from the public sector perspective. The board chair has to be prepared to engage government in dialogue and discussion about the future direction of the college and the system.

Mandarin, the board chair for Orange College, stated that the board chair has to understand the various rules and regulations for governing that board, and that the governing board of Orange College operates under the Carver model of board governance. He also informed me that a detailed job position description for the board chair, developed by the Minister, was provided in

Orange College's board governance manual.

Anjou, the president of Pear College, stated the board chair's primary role was to ensure that the mandate of the board is carried out and to provide leadership in bringing the board together in providing governance to the institution.

Bartlett, the board chair of Pear College, emphasized that one of the most important roles, as board chair, is offering leadership to the board in facilitating the board to operate as a unit -- a single unit. The board chair must recognize that all board members should be treated equally, and if dissension occurs, it is the chair's responsibility to deal with it and see to it that it does not recur. The board chair's role also is to oversee that the board, as a unit, is working together in policy making and implementation. The board chair assists with the agenda of a board meeting, and the chair must work very closely with the president, being very supportive of him or her. The board chair should serve as a strong link between the president and public board members. In addition, the board chair has to be responsible in orientating new board members to understand their roles. A board chair serves in a coordinating capacity to the board and must be very astute and aware of what is happening in and outside of the college.

Presence of documented board chair roles. All three colleges had role descriptions of the board chair in their board of governors manual. Although all participants agreed it was necessary to have documentation on the role of the board chair in their policy governance manuals, they stated that the board chair's role was determined, in addition to the documentation, by the personality of the individual who occupied this position. All participants were happy with

their role descriptions present in their manual, however, they stated it could be reviewed with the possibility of adding more information on the role of the board chair.

Apple College, in their college policy manual, identified six role description areas of the board chair which were: (a) to reflect the overall purpose and style of the college; (b) to provide leadership to the board in making policy for the purpose of administration of the college; (c) to chair meetings of the board of governors; (d) to make representation and appearances on behalf of the board; (e) to, unless otherwise specified, be the spokesman/woman for the board; and (f) to, in an official capacity, respond on behalf of the college to external agencies and community organizations.

Orange College, in their college board of governor's bylaw manual, identified the following roles of the board chair: (a) when present, preside at all meetings of the board; (b) act as official spokesman for the board; (c) be a signing officer of the board; (d) be an ex officio Member of all board committees; (e) be responsible for the integrity of the board process; (f) be responsible for effective board meetings; (g) be responsible for ensuring that the board carries out an evaluation of its performance; (h) be the primary representative to the media, the public, the college community, the Alberta and Federal Governments, and any other organization requiring a representative of the board; and (i) to attend any and all meetings required to carry out this role. Included in this manual was a detailed position description, on the role of the board chair, developed by the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. This detailed position description can be found in Chapter Two, on page 14 of this thesis.

Pear College, in their policy governance manual, listed the following board chair roles: (a) to approve and monitor the organization's mission, vision, and strategy; (b) to have a sound understanding of the organization and its environment; (c) to ensure that the board behaves in a manner consistent with its own rules and those legitimately imposed upon it from outside the organization; (d) to chair board meetings with all the commonly accepted power of that position; (e) to represent the board when appropriate to outside parties in announcing board-stated positions and in stating board decisions; and (f) to ensure that the vice-chair is informed of current and pending board issues and processes.

Theme One -- Preparation for the Position of Board Chair

All participants were asked, during the time of their interview, to comment on qualifications needed to be the board chair. In addition, all participants were asked to provide some comment on training of the board chair.

Gala, the board chair of Apple College, thought the board chair should have some board experience, preferably chair experience, and should be aware of the way the political and government system works. In addition, the board chair should have a passion for education.

MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, thought that good leadership and communication skills were the most important qualifications that the board chair could bring to the role. In addition, the board chair must have an understanding and appreciation, from a board perspective, of what is happening in the immediate and world community. MacIntosh stated, " the board chair has to be recognized in the community as being a good leader and being capable of linking with key decision makers in government in order to

bring attention to the college."

Mandarin, the board chair of Orange College, stated that previous experience and good leadership skills are the biggest qualifications a board chair needs to possess. Mandarin stated " The past boards that I have sat on have taught me a lot before I ever got here and that my greatest teacher was that experience."

Bartlett, the board chair of Pear College, thought that experience played a key role in qualifying an individual in becoming board chair. Bartlett reported that " the role of the board chair involves all sorts of decision making, and certainly the chair is in the public representing that particular college, and has to be fairly astute about what to say and how to represent the college." In addition, she commented on the importance of a board chair developing good communication skills, strategic thinking, good leadership skills, and the ability to do some visioning for the college as well as being a good facilitator within and outside the board. A knowledge of community and active involvement were other areas that Bartlett stressed a board chair should possess to be qualified.

Anjou, the president of Pear College, thought that board chairs need to have a great deal of public service, particularly experience on boards in order to qualify for this role. He stressed the importance of board chairs bringing some strong sense of how to motivate volunteers and make organizations work together. In addition he said, "strong team building skills, a strong business perspective, having a passion for and appreciating education, and having a legal perspective are all important attributes that an individual should possess before becoming board chair."

There was no written documentation from any of the colleges' board of

governors manuals or board minutes given to me on board chair qualifications. In Orange College's bylaw manual, the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development developed a detailed job position description for the board chair which included specific qualifications needed. These qualifications can be found in Chapter Two, on page 17 of this thesis.

All participants mentioned the importance of their board orientation process in assisting board members and even board chairs to better understand their roles. In addition, all participants commented on the Council of Board Chairs, composed of all board chairs from all the public colleges and technical institutions in Alberta, which meet three or four times a year, and how beneficial this is in assisting board chairs to understand their role in working more effectively with their board and other boards in the postsecondary system. All participants hoped that more could be offered in board chair orientation and on going training. MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, stressed the need for people, who have been successful board chairs in Alberta public colleges, to provide "some bench-marking" -- written publications in order to put the role of the board chair into perspective. A written publication, according to MacIntosh, "would be so vital and important, providing a link to one another who have been through the model, been through the role, and have done it well. Not everyone has done it well, so you need to get the best benchmark cases and find a way to have these stories told by the people who have actually lived in these roles." When I shared this idea with the other participants, they too felt very strongly about this need, in order to benefit an individual in being the board chair.

Theme Two -- Nature of Relationships

Relationships between the board chair and the president, the board chair

and the board members, and the board chair and significant community members outside the college were three deductive sub-themes, that emerged from the interview data. In addition, three inductive themes emerged from the interview data that were independent of the research sub-questions identified at the beginning of this study. The relationships between the board chair and the Minister, the board chair and other board chairs, and the board chair and the executive assistant to the board made up these three inductive sub-themes of the relationships theme.

Relationship between the board chair and the president. Gala, the board chair of Apple College stated that she had an excellent relationship with the president of Apple College. She emphasized, " that in order for a good relationship to exist between the board chair and the president, it has to be very positive with open communication, respect, commitment, trust, and acceptance." In addition, she said, "If you don't have trust and acceptance amongst your members, you're not going to have good relations, but if you have trust and acceptance, you can go to communications, then to setting out goals, and accomplishing goals."

MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, stated that his relationship with the board chair of Apple College was excellent and that they were working together moving in the right direction for the college. He stressed that their relationship was very open and trusting with mutual respect for each other. Further it is essential that the board chair and president have a good working relationship.

Mandarin, the board chair of Orange College, stated that his relationship with the president of Orange College was very good and that there was a strong

sense of trust and mutual respect for one another.

Bartlett, the board chair of Pear College, emphasized that the relationship with the president of Pear College is of utmost importance and that the relationship is based on supporting one another. Bartlett said " the relationship is very business like in that you are working together as co-workers, however it is also a close relationship where you work side by side."

Anjou, the president of Pear College, stated that the relationship with the board chair of Pear College was critically important to the success of the president, board chair and board, and the institution. Anjou reported that there has to be a balance between a strong board chair and strong president. He said, " the balance is about the balance between government and administration and about administration not leading a board so that they become a rubber stamping organization, and neither is it about the board getting into the business of micro management and running the institution." In addition, Anjou emphasized that " the board must learn its role of governance with the assistance of the board chair so that the president is given, from the board, clear direction on where to go and being allowed to exercise that judgment." According to Anjou a good strong relationship, between board chair and president, must be based on open communication, trust, and respect.

Very little written documentation in the colleges was found to support the interview data. Support, open communication, and cooperation were words, used in the study's board of governors' manuals which described the relationship that should exist among the board chair and the president.

Relationship between board chair and the board members. Gala, the board chair of Apple College, said the relationship has to be positive -- one of

open communication, respect, commitment, and trust. She said, "if you don't have trust and acceptance, you're not going to have good relations and we spend a lot of time working on our relations. Good healthy boards have to be able to argue at times, and they have to be able to come together no matter how the vote went in support of decisions."

MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, thought that the relationship between the board chair and the board members of Apple College was very good. He commented on the high degree of respect and trust which made this relationship positive.

Mandarin, the board chair of Orange College, said the relationship was good and that everyone on the board gets along very well. He stressed that he has a very up front board with very strong minded and capable individuals who respect and accept one another.

Bartlett, the board chair of Pear College, stated that the relationship was good and that " the board chair has to be the one that's responsible for making sure that each board member feels that their skills and expertise are being called upon." She also said, " that the board chair has to be very responsive to the board members when they make suggestions -- all this helps strengthen the relationship. The board members have to feel that they are here for a purpose, and that were drawing on their strength and wisdom." Bartlett concluded by stressing that the relationship has to be one of mutual respect and equality.

Anjou, the president of Pear College, emphasized that the good relationship board members share is based on the board chair playing her role well and ensuring that all opinions are acceptable and encouraged at the board table. He stated that " it's a great skill for the board chair to have that balance of

people feeling they can speak their minds, but at the end of the day, decisions are made, and they speak with one voice -- the board voice."

Relationship between the board chair and significant community members outside the college. Gala, the board chair of Apple College, said that the relationship was good. She has a fairly high profile and she views herself as a key ambassador for the college, thus she makes sure that she maintains contact with key people and clients. Gala emphasized that " the board chair has to always be thinking about ways to further the reputation and opportunities for the college, and must have a fairly high community profile, which means having good relations."

MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, reinforced that the relationship is extremely good and that the relationship is a very critical component of ensuring that things get done in the community.

Mandarin, the board chair of Orange College, stated that " the relationship is good and the board chair plays a large role in trying to get strong community ties to the college -- trying to get community members involved and aware of the college." Mandarin's board members are also involved heavily in trying to establish strong community ties to the college.

Bartlett, the board chair of Pear College, said that " the relationship was good and that the board chair has a big role in representing their college to the community. Part of establishing a good relationship with the community was trying to promote the college to people who can make a difference."

Anjou, the president of Pear College, stated that the board has a lobbying role to play in influencing the community and the board chair has a high profile position and can exercise considerable influence in a number of

community circles. The board chair, according to Anjou, is very visible in the community and has established good relations.

Relationship between the board chair and the Minister. This inductive sub-theme emerged from the interview data which was independent of the research sub-questions identified in chapter one of this study. All three board chairs commented on their good relationship with the Minister and that they were quite happy with their access to him and the support and direction he has provided.

Relationship between the board chair and other board chairs. Another inductive sub-theme that emerged from the interview data, which was independent of the research questions identified in Chapter one of this study, was this relationship. All participants, interviewed in this study, emphasized the importance of the Council of Board Chairs. They stressed the need, not only to be concerned exclusively with their particular college, but to look beyond and work together, with other board chairs, to improve the Alberta postsecondary system. The Council of Board Chairs meets three to four times a year and is composed of all board chairs from Alberta public colleges and technical institutions.

Relationship between the board chair and the executive assistant to the board. The final inductive sub-theme that emerged from the interview data was this relationship. All participants identified a need for a strong relationship, which existed in all three colleges, between the board chair and the executive assistant to the board. All participants commented on the important role that the executive assistant has in relation to the board chair. The executive assistant to the board in all three colleges is is a tremendous asset and resource to the

board chair by organizing, keeping schedule, and knowing what is important and not important for the board chair. All board chairs concluded, that without their executive assistant to the board, their job would be extremely difficult.

Theme Three -- Time Commitment of the Board Chair

All participants were asked to comment on the approximate amount of time, in hours per month, that the board chair spends: (a) with the president only, (b) with all board members, (c) with other members within the college, (d) with significant community members outside the college, including functions and events, and (e) by themselves -- alone, working in this role.

The time commitment of the board chair with the president alone, was reported to range from three to four hours per month. The time commitment of the board chair with all board members was reported to range from six to eight hours per month. The time commitment of the board chair with other members within the college, excluding board members, was reported to range from one to three hours per month. The time commitment of the board chair with significant community members outside of the college, including special functions and events, was reported to range from 10 to 12 hours per month. The time commitment of the board chair working in this role alone was reported to range from 2 to 17 hours per month. In this particular time commitment frame, of the board chair working alone in this role, the board chair of Pear College reported that the board chair commits 17 hours per month and the president of Pear College reported that the board chair commits 15 hours per month. The participants from Apple College and Orange college reported that the board chair commits between two to four hours per month alone working in this role.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of the findings of this study are organized according to three categories of contextual data and three emergent themes. The three categories of contextual data are: (a) participants' backgrounds and satisfaction with their roles, (b) appointment process, and (c) role descriptions. The three emergent themes are: (a) preparation for the position of board chair, (b) nature of relationships, and (c) time commitment of the board chair.

Participants' backgrounds and satisfaction with their roles. The findings of this study indicated that a board chair's background in serving on a previous board was important in becoming the board chair. All three board chairs from this study had considerable previous board experience. Two board chairs had served on their governing board prior to becoming the board chair and the other board chair had served on a board outside the public college system with considerable experience as a senior administrator. The literature (e.g., Carver, 1997; Hamilton & Hardstein, 1985; Ingram & Associates, 1993; Lardner, 1985) discusses the importance for the board chair to posses several leadership qualities in order to be successful in this role, however, there was no mention as to what background experience the board chair should have. According to the Ministerial document entitled, *Position Description: Chairs -- Colleges and Technical Institutes Boards of Governors* , one of the qualifications needed to be eligible to serve as board chair is to possess experience at a board or senior administrative level with complex organizations (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994). This was consistent with the background experience of the three board chairs in this study.

All participants in this study were very content and confident in occupying their role. The three board chairs were satisfied in their role and would be only too happy to accept another term if appointed. The literature review, provided in Chapter Two of this study, did not make reference to board chairs and satisfaction with their role.

Appointment process. All participants of this study except for McIntosh, the president of Apple College, provided very similar data on the selection process of the board chair to their institution. MacIntosh, did not provide any data because he was not at Apple College when the board chair was selected. This data was very consistent with, and was supported through, specific documentation provided to me from Orange College's board of governors bylaw manual entitled, *Advanced Education and Career Development Board Chair Appointment Process -- Institutions* (Alberta Advanced Education & Career Development, 1994). Although this particular document was not part of the literature review in Chapter Two, it was available to the public from the department of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development.

A careful review of available literature revealed little or no reference to the selection process of the board chair. In 1987, Rainsforth completed a research study entitled, *The Selection of Alberta Community College Public Board Members* , in which she concluded that potential candidates were identified from a variety of sources including the Minister, MLAs, board chairmen, opposition MLAs, and self applicants. Selection procedures were found to be more closely centered in government and the Minister was the principal actor throughout selection proceedings. He chose personal staff to assist in the assessment of candidates and, in general, the premier, MLAs,

board chairmen, and referees were consulted during the process. Since appointments were made by the political party currently in office, individuals with a political philosophy in tune with the government were sought. Board chairs were appointed through a similar process. This form of appointment was substantially different from the existing process. The current appointment process for board chairs is less political than the former appointment process which existed in 1987. Governing boards now are much more involved in the decision of who will be board chair for their board. A subcommittee of the affected board, consisting of: (a) the current board chair or designate, (b) the president, (c) two current public members of the board, and (d) a student member of the board, will be constituted by the board to review, confirm, and prioritize candidates which will then be submitted to the Minister (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994). The decision on who the board chair shall be is solely the responsibility of the Minister who then recommends this person to Cabinet for approval. The Minister relies less on the Premier and MLAs but rather takes into account the applicant's qualifications and recommendations made by the subcommittee of the affected board. Applicants' political philosophy does not form the basis of selection. All participants were very content with the current appointment process for board chair.

All participants were fully aware of the length of term of office for the board chair and the data reported was consistent. Documentation from Grange College's board of governors bylaw manual supported these interview findings along with the literature found in Chapter Two. Government legislation found in the Alberta Colleges Act states that the board chair is appointed for a term of up

to three years; who then may be redesignated for one further term, for a maximum of six years (Alberta, 1996). In addition, the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development had developed specific terms and conditions in the document entitled, *Position Description for the Board Chair in Colleges and Technical Institutes* , which states the legislated length of term in office for the board chair (1994). Four participants were happy with the length of term, however, Mandarin, the board chair from Orange College felt that a two year term, with the possibility of a second term, was adequate. No literature was found in support of an appropriate amount of time a board chair should hold office.

Role descriptions. The role descriptions which were provided by four of the five participants were quite similar in context and complimented one another. The list of findings from the four participants on role descriptions, were consistent with the suggested role developed by the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development (1994). The board chairs reported that they knew their role very well and were very confident in this position. They also reported that board members were very familiar with the board chair's role and this was important in successful board governance. Getzels, Lipham, and Campbell (1989) support this finding by discussing the importance of knowing the board chair role well which should be consistent with other peoples' perceptions of your role, especially in complex organizations, in order to prevent role conflict .

All participants reported being aware of the documented board chair role description from their board of governors manual. In addition, all participants were aware of and stated that there was a detailed position description for the

board chair developed by the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development in their board of governors manual. It was reported by all participants that it was necessary to have documented board chair role guidelines but stated that the board chair's role was much more than that -- being very dependent on the personality of the individual who occupied this position. This is supported by Ingram and Associates (1993) who state how a board chair performs in this role is largely related to one's past experiences. Although all three colleges had detailed Ministerial documentation in their board of governors' manuals on the role of the board chair there was little documentation created specifically by the college on the role of their board chair. It is very important that a governing board formulate and define its job first and only then derive the chairperson's role; both should be in written form in order to provide the chairperson more confidence to take actions (Carver, 1997).

Preparation for the position of board chair. All participants agreed that previous experience on governing boards and an understanding and an appreciation of postsecondary education prepared an individual for the board chair position. Good leadership, communication, and facilitation skills, along with a good understanding of educational issues both inside and outside the educational institution, were other skills identified by participants that were important in successfully preparing one to be board chair. These findings are consistent with and supported by the list of qualifications needed to be eligible to serve as board chair identified by the Minister of Alberta Advanced and Career Development (1994). Additional literature (Carver, 1997; Hamilton & Hartstein, 1985; Ingram & Associates, 1993; and Lardner, 1985) supported the

above findings on preparation needed to be the board chair. All participants commented on the importance of the council of board chairs in assisting board chairs to better understand their role and work more effectively with their board and other boards in the postsecondary system. MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, emphasized the need for successful board chairs to become involved in adding to the limited body of literature telling their stories on how to be better prepared for the board chair role.

Nature of relationships. Ingram and Associates (1993) identified that the relationship between the president and the board chair is vital to how well the governing board will perform and that the synergy between these two individuals can make possible what neither individual could accomplish. Charyna (1996) completed a research study on experiences of five college presidents in a province in western Canada. One college president in this study reported that the board chair provided him with substantial support in leadership and that this support was very meaningful. Other presidents in this study reported feelings of stress and pressure working with their board of governors due to a relationship that may have been missing strong support and trust between both parties. Charyna recommended that further research be undertaken identifying president--board chair relations. All three relationships between the board chair and the president, in my study, were described to have been excellent and that maintaining this very special relationship is critical to the success of their college. All participants agreed that this relationship was based on the following qualities: (a) positive, (b) open, (c) close, (d) respectful, (e) committed, (f) supportive (g) trustful, and (h) accepting.

All participants agreed that a good to very good relationship existed

between the board chair and board members and that the following qualities in this relationship existed: (a) respect, (b) open communication, (c) acceptance, (d) trust, (e) equality, and (f) collectiveness. This is supported by Hamilton and Hartstein (1985) who insisted that the most important role of the board chair is to communicate tactfully with the entire board in order to resolve problems and to maintain good working relationships. Lardner (1985) discussed the importance of leadership and leadership styles that a board chair may employ. The chair of a community college governing board should be the go-between, the interlocutor. The board chair must mediate and contain conflict in a "cool," calm, and firm manner while steering opposing parties towards outcomes that are in the best interest of the institution. This directed effort by the board chair must be done in a supportive, considerate approach in order for the board chair's leadership to be most productive (Lardner, 1985).

The relationship between the board chair and significant community members outside the college was reported by the participants in this study to be good and that the board chair had the following responsibilities in making this relationship strong: (a) be a key ambassador for the college and maintain good relations with key people and clients; (b) have a high community profile and establish a good relationship with the community to ensure that things get done; (c) actively promote the college in the community; and (d) play a large role in trying to get community members, who can make a difference, involved and aware of the college. These findings were consistent with the board chair position description document developed by the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. Although the relationship between

internal governing board members was very important, all participants felt that the college could not function without the support of the community and that the board chair, in addition to the president, of the college had to establish and maintain positive and strong working relationships with the community

Additional relationships. In this study I found three additional board chair relationships which were independent of the research sub-questions identified in Chapter One. All participants felt that these three relationships between: (a) the board chair and the Minister, (b) the board chair and other board chairs, and (c) the board chair and the executive assistant to the board, were very important and should not be overlooked.

The relationship between the board chair and the Minister was identified as an important relationship from the Government sector. All three board chairs were consistent in reporting that their relationship with the Minister was good and that they were happy with their access to him and the support and direction he had provided. This relationship, from the board chairs' perspectives, was probably based on feelings of allegiance towards the Minister -- after all he had appointed them. In addition, funding is provided to the college institution by the government and this implies that a good working relationship between the Minister and the board chair is needed.

The relationship between the board chair and other board chairs was stressed in this study's findings. All participants agreed that the Council of Board Chairs, which met four times a year, was very beneficial in educating board chairs to look beyond their educational institution while working together to improve the Alberta postsecondary system. Carver (1990) discusses the importance of proper preparation of new board members requiring them to

become thoroughly familiar with the process and current values and perspectives of the board they are joining, with present board members being the best persons, to impart this training. In addition, the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (1989) is involved with continuing education activities for trustees. Although it is important for board members to meet and learn from one another about their board and other boards in the college system, it is just as important for board chairs to meet and develop strong relations providing a holistic perspective on system governance. The Alberta Council of Board Chairs provides this. No literature was available in relation to relationships among board chairs.

The final relationship which emerged from this study's findings was the relationship between the board chair and executive assistant to the board. All participants agreed that a strong relationship existed and that the assistant to the board was a tremendous asset and resource to the board chair. There is little literature concerning the executive assistant to the board chair, there is no model job description, and there is no academic program leading to certification of the job (Ingram & Associates, 1993). The position of executive assistant to the board chair and to the president, who most likely is the same person, continues to evolve in academic institutions as an increasingly important part of good management and governance (Ingram & Associates, 1993). Although the scope and function of the position vary widely, board chairs and presidents depend increasingly on the position to ensure that the board and the institution are well served (Ingram & Associates, 1993). The findings were consistent with the literature. All participants reported that their board secretary was enormously helpful to the president when the president was beleaguered with

pressures and demands from everywhere, and to the board chair in functioning more effectively while expectations about their performance and demands on their time continue to multiply.

Time commitment of the board chair. The findings related to time commitment of the board chair were very consistent between the board chair and the president of each college. In addition, the findings related to time commitment of the board chair were very consistent between the three colleges except for the category of the board chair working in this role alone. Although the board chair and president of Pear College reported similar time commitments, of 17 and 15 hours respectively, Apple College and Orange college participants reported that the board chair commits two to four hours per month working alone in this role. In order to be a successful board chair, it is very important that potential board chairs understand the considerable amount of time that is dedicated as a volunteer in this position. In addition, it is also important that all the players involved in the Alberta public college system appreciate the increasing time that a board chair commits to this position. This is an important aspect in order to continue drawing excellent candidates to this position and continued excellence from current board chairs.

Summary

This chapter was divided into two sections. The first section reported the findings of the interview data and certain written documentation that was provided to me, by the participants of this study, during interviews. The interview data reported through three categories of contextual data which were participants' backgrounds and satisfaction with their roles, appointment process, and job descriptions. Preparation for the position of board chair,

nature of relationships, and time commitment of the board chair made up the three general emergent themes. Relationships between board chair and Minister, board chair and other board chairs, and board chair and the executive assistant to the board were three sub-themes which emerged inductively from the nature of relationships theme. The second section of this chapter related the findings of this study with the available literature on the role of the board chair. A substantial amount of literature, which supported the findings, came from the documents that the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development developed, entitled *Position Description: Board Chair, Colleges, and Technical Institutes; and Board Chair Appointment Process -- Institutions* (1994).

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This final chapter presents an overview of the study and a summary of the findings. Conclusions are then drawn based on the findings and literature reviewed. On the basis of these conclusions, recommendations for practice and research are then presented. Implications, based on these recommendations, are then drawn and a brief discussion on the expanded conceptual framework closes the chapter.

Overview of the Study

Public colleges are complex organizations governed by boards of governors which are created through government legislation. These boards are critical to the operation of public colleges. College boards in Alberta are faced with an array of problems today that were not present several years ago. Colleges have to do more with less -- more students and less money -- consequently, the need for effective board governance is critical. Public college boards in Alberta are corporations established by order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Each board is composed of an academic and nonacademic staff member, seven community lay persons (eight at Lakeland College), one of whom is designated as board chair (Alberta, 1996). The pursuit of excellence, and the extent to which a college achieves a degree of excellence, is largely due to the overall relationship among the board members, board chair, and the president. The quality of governance often depends on the skill of the chairing party who is responsible for the functioning of the board (Carver, 1990). Although much has been published concerning respective roles and responsibilities of the governing board and the president in managing

the affairs of colleges, little attention has been given to the role of the board chair. This study investigated personal insights about the role of the board chair in a public college.

Six specific research sub-questions were developed to guide this study namely what are the perceptions held by the:

1. board chair of the role of the board chair?
2. president of the role of the board chair?
3. board chair of the relationship that exists between the board chair and the president?
4. president of the relationship that exists between the board chair and president?
5. board chair of the relationship that exists between the board chair and the board members?
6. president of the relationship that exists between the board chair and the board members?

Interviews and document analyses were employed to collect data by which to address the specific research sub-questions. An interview schedule was developed and pilot tested in February 1997. Interviews for the main study were conducted with participants from three selected Alberta public colleges during the month of May 1997. Personal insights, on the role of the board chair, were collected from the board chair and president of two colleges and from the board chair of the third college. Due to unavoidable circumstances, the president of the third college was unable to participate.

Three categories of contextual data and three emergent themes were derived during the data analysis which were based on questions asked through

the interview schedule of this study. The three categories of contextual data were: (a) participant background and satisfaction with their role, (b) appointment process, and (c) job descriptions. The three emergent themes were: (a) preparation for the position of board chair, (b) nature of relationships, and (c) time commitment of the board chair.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of this are summarized in this section. The findings are presented according to the three categories of contextual data and the three emergent themes discussed above.

Participants' backgrounds and satisfaction with their roles. The three board chair participants had served from six months to five years in their current role as board chair. Gala, the board chair of Apple College, had served two and one half years in this role. Mandarin, the board chair of Orange College, was serving in his second term for a total of five years. Bartlett, the board chair of Pear College, had served six months in this role. All three board chairs had considerable experience as board members, prior to becoming board chair, either serving on their current college governing board or other boards. All three board chairs were attracted to this role because of their dedication to the successful provision of postsecondary education in Alberta, and their longstanding interest in their college. In addition, all three board chair participants reported that they would gladly accept an extension beyond their term if available.

MacIntosh, the president of Apple College had served in this role for four months and three weeks while Anjou, the president of Pear College, had served just under two years. Both presidential participants reported that they enjoyed

thoroughly their role as president and would not like to be the board chair at this time in their life.

Appointment process. Selection process of the board chair and length of term of office were two sub-categories of the appointment process.

McIntosh, the president of Apple College, was not able to comment on the selection process of the board chair due to unfamiliarity with this process being in this role for only four months and three weeks. All other participants reported that the appointment of the board chair was open to the public and had been advertised in Alberta major newspapers by the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development. In addition, nominations were accepted by the Human Resources Department of Advanced Education and Career Development from the governing board's nominating committee of the affected institution. The Human Resources Department then screened all applicants and developed a short list which was given to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development for review and selection. The Minister then recommended this individual to Cabinet who make the final decision. All participants reported that they were happy with the current process for board chair selection. Gala, the board chair for Apple College, emphasized that the selection process "should never become too political -- it should not be done for political advantage or reasons." Mandarin, the board chair of Orange College reported that recommendations to the Minister by the affected institution's governing board reduces the possibility of an "outsider being parachuted in as board chair." Bartlett, the board chair for Pear college, liked the openness of appointment and said, "I like to see things based more on credentials rather than on political connections."

The documentation that was provided to me from Orange College in its Board of Governors Bylaw Manual included a three page document, prepared by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development Legislative Services, dated February 4th, 1994. A brief summary of this document entitled *Advanced Education and Career Development Board Chair Appointment Process -- Institutions* can be found on pages 42 and 43. This documentation supported the participant interview findings on the board chair selection process.

Length of term of office for the board chair was reported by all participants to be three years with the potential of serving a second three year term for a maximum of six years. Documentation was provided to me from Orange College in their Board of Governors Bylaw Manual in the board guidelines section. This four page document, entitled *Position Description: Board Chair, Colleges and Technical Institutes*, was from the Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development Legislative Services Branch, dated February 4th, 1994. This document reported that the board chair is appointed for a term of up to three years; who then may be redesignated for one further term, for a maximum of six years. All participants except Mandarin, the board chair of Orange College felt that three years with a possibility of an additional three year extension was appropriate. Mandarin suggested that two years was more appropriate than three years with the possibility of another two year term. Mandarin felt that three years was too long especially "if a board chair was not working well with the others." All participants stressed that in most circumstances a board chair should have previous experience as a board member from preferably the same college board or another board with a similar governing structure.

Role descriptions. Learning of the board chair role, role descriptions of the board chair, and presence of documented board chair roles were three sub-categories of role description contextual data that emerged from the interviews and documentary data.

Learning of the board chair role, according to all participants, is learned first and foremost from life experiences and having served on previous boards. In addition, all participants reported that their board had a board orientation process in place which would have been beneficial in assisting previous board members, who are now board chairs, in understanding the governance of their college and the role of board chair.

Role descriptions of the board chair were provided by four participants. MacIntosh, the president of Apple College, reported that the board chair was responsible for: (a) chairing board meetings and activities of the board; (b) overseeing of the appointment of new members to the board; (c) providing direction and leadership in setting the vision, goals, and objectives of the college; (d) being the community spokesperson for the college; and (e) engaging government in dialogue and discussion about the future direction of the college and the system. Mandarin, the board chair for Orange College, reported that the board chair was responsible for: (a) understanding the various rules and regulations for their governing board which was based on the Carver model of board governance; and (b) following the detailed job description for the board chair that the Minister had developed in Orange College's board governance manual. Anjou, the president of Pear College, reported that the primary role of the board chair was to ensure the mandate of the board is carried out, providing leadership in bringing the board together in

governing the institution. Bartlett, the board chair of Pear College, reported that the most important role of the board chair was to lead the board in facilitating the board to operate as a unit -- a single unit. In addition, Bartlett emphasized that the board chair should: (a) recognize and treat all board members equal; (b) deal with dissension between board members and see to it that it does not recur; (c) oversee that the board is working together as a unit in policy making and implementation; (d) assist with the agenda of board meetings; (e) work very closely with the president, being supportive of him or her, and serve as a strong link between the president and public board members; (f) be responsible for orientating new board members in understanding their roles; and (g) serve in a coordinating capacity to the board and be very astute and aware of what is happening in and outside of the college.

The presence of documented board chair roles were available in the board of governors manual found at all three colleges. A detailed description of these documented roles can be found on pages 46, 47, and 48 of Chapter Four. All participants reported that it was necessary to have documented guidelines on the role of the board chair in their board of governors manual, however, they felt that the board chair's role was much more than this being very dependent on the personality of the individual who occupied this position. In, addition all participants were happy with these role descriptions but suggested that a review of this role would be in order with the possibility of adding more information about the role of the board chair.

Theme one -- preparation for the position of board chair. According to the five participants, the board chair should be prepared for the position of board chair by possessing: (a) previous experience on governing boards

preferably in the postsecondary education system; (b) an understanding and appreciation of educational issues both inside and outside their college; (c) good leadership and communication skills including the ability to do strategic thinking, visioning, and decision making for the college as well as being a good facilitator within and outside the board; (d) a strong sense of how to motivate volunteers and make organizations work together; (e) strong team building skills along with a strong business and legal perspective; and (f) an awareness of the way the political and government systems works along with a current knowledge of what is happening in the immediate and world community. In addition to the above qualifications that the board chair should possess, all participants commented on how beneficial the council of chairs was in assisting board chairs to understand their role in working more effectively with their board and other boards in the postsecondary system. MacIntosh, the president of Apple College stressed the need for additional research to be done by successful previous board chairs "providing some bench marking" telling their stories in order to put the role of the board chair into perspective.

There was no written documentation on board chair qualifications within any of the colleges' board of governors manuals or board minutes given to me. In Orange College's bylaw manual, the Ministerial detailed job position description for the board chair did state specific qualifications needed. These qualifications can be found in Chapter Two on page 14.

Theme two -- nature of relationships. Relationships between the board chair and the president, the board chair and the board members, and the board chair and significant community members outside the college were three deductive sub-themes, that emerged from the interview data. In addition, three

inductive themes emerged that were independent of the research sub-questions identified at the beginning of this study. The relationships between the board chair and the Minister, the board chair and other board chairs, and the board chair and the executive assistant to the board made up these three inductive sub-themes of the relationships theme.

An excellent relationship between the board chair and president was reported by all participants in this study. This excellent relationship was based on the following qualities: (a) positive, (b) open, (c) close, (d) respect, (e) commitment, (f) support, (g) trust, and (h) acceptance. Very little written documentation in the colleges was found to support the interview data. However, support, open communication, and cooperation were words used in the study's board of governors' manuals which described the relationship that should exist among the board chair and the president.

A good to very good relationship between the board chair and the board members was reported to exist by the participants in this study. This relationship was based on the following qualities: (a) respect, (b) open communication, (c) acceptance, (d) trust, (e) equality, and (f) collectiveness. Very little written documentation in the colleges was found to support the interview data. Again, support, open communication, and cooperation were words used in the study's board of governors' manuals which described the relationship that should exist among the board chair and the board members.

The relationship between the board chair and significant community members outside the college was reported by the participants in this study to be good. The following responsibilities of the board chair in making this relationship good were emphasized by the participants: (a) be a key

ambassador for the college and maintain good relations with key people and clients; (b) have a high community profile and establish a good relationship with the community to ensure that things get done; and (c) promotion of the college and playing a large role in trying to get community members, who can make a difference, involved and aware of the college.

The relationship between the board chair and the Minister was an inductive sub-theme that emerged from the interview data which was independent of the research sub-questions identified in chapter one of this study. All three board chairs commented on their good relationship with the Minister and that they were quite happy with their access to him and the support and direction he provided. In addition, all board chairs felt that the Council of Board Chair meetings, which had strong Ministerial support, were invaluable in working together for Alberta's postsecondary system.

The relationship between the board chair and other board chairs was another inductive sub-theme that emerged from the interview data, which was independent of the research questions identified in Chapter one of this study. All participants, interviewed in this study, emphasized the importance of the Council of Board Chairs. They stressed the need, not only to be concerned only with their particular college, but to look beyond and work together, with other board chairs, to improve the Alberta postsecondary system. The Council of Board Chairs meets three to four times a year and is composed of all board chairs from Alberta public colleges and technical institutions.

The relationship between the board chair and the executive assistant to the board was the final inductive sub-theme that emerged from the interview data. All participants identified a need for a strong relationship, which existed in

all three colleges, between the board chair and the executive assistant to the board. All participants commented on the important role that the executive assistant has in relation to the board chair. The executive assistant to the board in all three colleges is is a tremendous asset and resource to the board chair who organizes schedules, and knows what is important and not important for the board chair. All board chairs concluded, that without their executive assistant to the board, their job would be extremely difficult.

Theme three -- time commitment of the board chair. The following time commitments are approximate ranges in hours per month that that the participants of the study reported: (a) three to four hours with the president alone; (b) six to eight hours with all board members; (c) one to three hours with other members within the college, excluding board members; (d) 10 to 12 hours with significant community members outside of the college, including special functions and events; and (e) 2 to 17 hours working in this role alone. The board chair of Pear College reported committing 17 hours per month and the president of Pear College reported that the board chair commits 15 hours per month working in this role. The participants from Apple College and Orange college reported the board chairs additionally commit between two to four hours per month working outside of the regular board responsibilities.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of the board chair and president regarding the role of the board chair. This study has produced a number of significant findings from which 12 conclusions can be drawn.

1. The quality of governance is dependent on the skill of the board chair who is responsible for the functioning of the board. Somebody needs to be

responsible for the functioning of the board and the findings strongly support that this is the board chair. In addition, all participants in this study identified that leadership skills are required for chairing a board which has an impact on the quality of governance.

2. The three board chairs in this study were very content in their role and were enthusiastic in accepting another term, if possible. Board chairs need to feel very comfortable and content in their role bringing a high degree of confidence to the role, based on life's experiences including previous board experience. By being comfortable, content, and confident in this role, board chairs can maximize their potential in establishing strong, positive, supportive interpersonal working relationships which, according to the findings of this study, are needed to be successful.

3. All board chairs in this study were familiar and satisfied with the appointment process for the board chair. This process is less political and the affected board has more of an influence on the Minister's decision than the process which existed in 1987. Rainsforth's (1987) identified that the Premier, MLAs, and a candidate's political affiliation had a substantial influence on who the Minister chose to be board chair. The appointment process which currently exists has changed substantially according to the findings of this study. The Premier and MLAs have a lesser influence on the Minister's decision. The Minister's decision is based on a candidate's qualifications and a subcommittee of the affected board who confirms and ranks candidates for the Minister.

4. The current literature and participant interview data on board chair role descriptions provided strong support for the need for a detailed role description generated by each board which is consistent with Ministerial documentation.

All three colleges had very little written documentation on the role of the board chair and all participants agreed that a more detailed role description should be generated specific to the board's responsibility but consistent with Ministerial documentation. Participants agreed that a more detailed documented role description would be beneficial, to new board chairs and other board members, in understanding the board chair role better.

5. All board chairs in this study appeared to be well prepared for this role. According to the participants, the board chairs possessed good leadership, communication, and facilitation skills with a sound knowledge of educational issues both inside and outside the educational institution. In addition, there is great benefit in serving as a board member prior to becoming board chair and being educated through a board orientation process. The existence of the Council of Board Chairs is also very important in assisting board chairs to better understand their role and work more effectively with their board and other boards in the postsecondary system.

6. All participants perceived that the relationship between the board chair and the president was excellent and this was essential for the board and educational institution to survive. Participants described that the following qualities existed in making this relationship excellent: (a) positive, (b) trusting, (c) open communication, (d) respect, (e) acceptance, and (f) commitment. The relationship between the board chair and the president is critical to how well the governing board will perform and the synergy which is created between these two individuals will make possible what neither individual could accomplish.

7. A very good working relationship between the board chair and board

members was perceived to exist by the study's participants. Participants described that the following qualities existed in making this relationship very good: (a) respect, (b) open communication (c) acceptance (d) trust, (e) equality, and (f) collectiveness. Carver (1997) and all participants perceived the board chair as the leader of the board but stressed that the board chair needs to facilitate and lead the board in being responsible as a whole in board leadership. In order for this to be accomplished, a very good working relationship between the board chair and board members needs to exist.

8. All board chairs in this study perceived themselves as ambassadors for their college. Whenever the board chairs attended community functions, business meetings, and any other activity they would take the opportunity to talk about the college and its mission.

9. A good supportive relationship needs to exist between the board chair and the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. This relationship needs to be good and supportive since the board chair is a significant representative of the college and much of the funding for the operation of and policy direction that affects the college comes from Government.

10. All board chairs in this study perceived themselves as having a good relationship with other board chairs of similar governing institutions. Participants stated that in order to maximize the opportunity for board chairs to better understand their roles and look beyond their educational institution, working together to improve the Alberta postsecondary governance system, board chairs need to have a good working relationship.

11. All participants perceived that the board chair had an excellent

relationship with the executive assistant to the board chair and stated that without the support of the executive assistant to the board their job would be overwhelming. The executive assistants to the board in all three colleges were a tremendous asset and resource to the board chairs. They organized board chair schedules, knowing what was important and not important.

12. The board chairs in this study dedicated a considerable amount of volunteer time in order to successfully meet the demands of their college community. The time commitment of the board chairs, in this study, working with the president, board members, other staff in the college, significant community members outside of the college, and alone in this role was between 22 hours to 44 hours per month. Clearly the role of the board chair is complex and demanding both according to the participants of this study and the Minister's job position description.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for practice and research are presented below. They have been drawn from the conclusions which were based on the findings of this study.

Practice. Several recommendations for practice on the role of the board chair are presented.

1. That new board chairs attend a debriefing meeting with the president, meet with other board chairs, and review relevant documentation pertaining to the role of the board chair. This will help new board chairs to become more comfortable, content, and confident in the role as identified in Conclusion number 2. An unhappy and uncomfortable board chair, with little confidence, impairs the functioning capacity of the chair and has the potential to weaken his

or her working relationships.

2. That new board chair candidates be very familiar with the appointment process of the board chair including the selection process and length of term of office. This will assist them to better understand their role, terms, and conditions and determine if they are satisfied with this process. Conclusion number 3 identified participants of this study being familiar and satisfied with the appointment process. A detailed description of the board chair appointment process is available in a document by the Department of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development and new board chair candidates should review this thoroughly.

3. That board chairs facilitate board members in collectively working together towards establishing and defining their board role and then defining specific board member roles including a detailed position description for the board chair. In Conclusion number 5 it was identified that a more detailed position description for the role of the board chair be developed specific to the affected board and consistent with Ministerial documentation. Prior to developing and defining documented board chair roles, board chairs need to develop an orientation process for new board members in order to understand their board's role and a continual updating process should be in place. Once the board's role has been developed and defined specific to the college the board chair's role can then be defined and documented. In addition board chairs should be very familiar with their role description document, with an understanding that the quality of serving in this role is not only dependent on this document, but also on the personality of the individual..

4. That current practice of regularly scheduled meetings of board chairs

continue through the Council of Board Chairs. This would ensure the opportunity for board chairs to share common problems and potential solutions. Conclusion numbers 5 and 10 identified the benefits of board chair preparation and of relationships developed through the Council of Board chairs.

6. That board chairs strive to have a high community profile and maintain good working relations with key people in order to ensure that things get done. They can achieve this by maintaining a close liaison with community, business, education, and industry leaders and by promoting the college as much as possible. Board chairs need to be aware at all times that they are ambassadors for their college as identified in Conclusion number 8.

7. That board chairs meet on a regular basis to establish and continue good supportive relations with the Minister as identified in Conclusion number 9. The board chair should be responsible in providing advice to the Minister and keep him informed about the development of the institution and its plans.

8. That new board chair candidates be aware of and be prepared for the enormous responsibility and time commitment needed to serve as a successful board chair. This enormous responsibility and time commitment was identified in Conclusion number 12. New board chair candidates can become more aware and prepared for this responsibility and time commitment by reviewing in detail all Ministerial documentation pertaining to the role of the board chair. In addition new board candidates can be more aware and prepared by talking to: (a) the past board chair of the college or board chairs of similar governing colleges, (b) the president of the college or presidents of similar governing colleges, (c) other board members of the college or board members of similar governing colleges, and (d) the executive assistant to the board of the college

or of similar governing colleges as this individual is very aware of the board chair role as identified in Conclusion number 11.

Research. Several recommendations for additional research on the role of the board chair are presented.

1. Additional research should be undertaken to study the selection process of a board chair and the specific criteria used in making this decision from a Ministerial perspective. Participants in this study were aware of and satisfied with the appointment process of the board chair as identified in Conclusion number 3. However, it may be beneficial to interview the Minister and follow the appointment process, in detail for several appointed board chairs, in order to determine the appropriateness of the Ministerial documentation on the selection process.

2. Additional research should be undertaken by previous successful public college board chairs in telling their story to better prepare board chairs in entering this role, Additional research of this sort is also needed to strengthen the current limited body of knowledge on the role of the board chair. Conclusion numbers 5 and 10, which identified the importance of board chairs sharing knowledge and educating one another on the role of the board chair through the Council of Board Chairs, gave rise to this recommendation

3. Additional research is needed to study the relationship between board chairs and the Minister in determining the impact this relationship has on board chairs and the postsecondary governance system. Conclusion number 9 identified that a good supportive relationship existed in this study and should exist in other colleges in order for the achievement of successful governance. The specific details of this relationship were not revealed in this study and

additional research would be beneficial in preparing new board chairs to be aware of how this relationship impacts the role of the board chair. In addition, current board chairs could benefit from additional research on this relationship in order to help strengthen possible weakening relationships.

4. Additional research is needed to study the relationship among board chairs and the impact this relationship has on board chairs and the postsecondary governance system. Conclusion number 10 identified the importance of establishing a good working relationship with other board chairs, however, additional research is needed to examine more closely the impact that these relationships have on the role of the board chair. This may be accomplished through interviews with board chairs on these relationships and directly observing relationships at the Council of Board Chairs meetings.

5. Additional research is needed to study the role of the executive assistant to the board more closely and the impact this person has on the board chair, president, governing board, and educational institution. The important position of the executive assistant to the board and the excellent relationship among the board chair and president, as identified in Conclusion number 11, continues to evolve in academic institutions as an increasingly important part of good management and governance (Ingram & Associates, 1993).

Implications

All the recommendations that have been presented have implications in terms of time and cost. If the above recommendations were carried out the following people would be affected: (a) Alberta public college governing board chairs, (b) the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, (c) employees in the Human Resources Department and other

departments of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, (d) Alberta public college presidents, (e) Alberta public college executive assistant's to the board, (f) Alberta public college board members, (g) community, business, education, and industry leaders who can make a difference to Alberta public colleges, and (h) graduate students and all other individuals assisting in undertaking additional research recommended in this study on the role of the board chair. The time needed from these individuals in order to carry out the above recommendations would be substantial, however, the benefit to the postsecondary education system should outweigh the personal costs to the individual.

Expanded conceptual framework. The findings of this study support the conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) with some additional modifications. Figure 5.1 on the following page is an expanded conceptual framework for the study which incorporates the findings of this study. This expanded conceptual framework is very similar to the original framework in Figure 2. 1, however, three new relationships were added. These relationships were between: (a) the board chair and the Minister; (b) the board chair and other board chairs; and (c) the board chair and the executive assistant to the board.

The bottom of Figure 5.1 displays a box with the word "board role" in it. The board role should be perceived as the starting point in this figure as it addresses the purpose and responsibility of the collective board. The role of the board is very complex and dynamic in nature, however, its basic responsibility is to provide leadership and governance for the educational institution. Every board needs to develop and define their board role in order to begin functioning as a board of governors. This board role should be

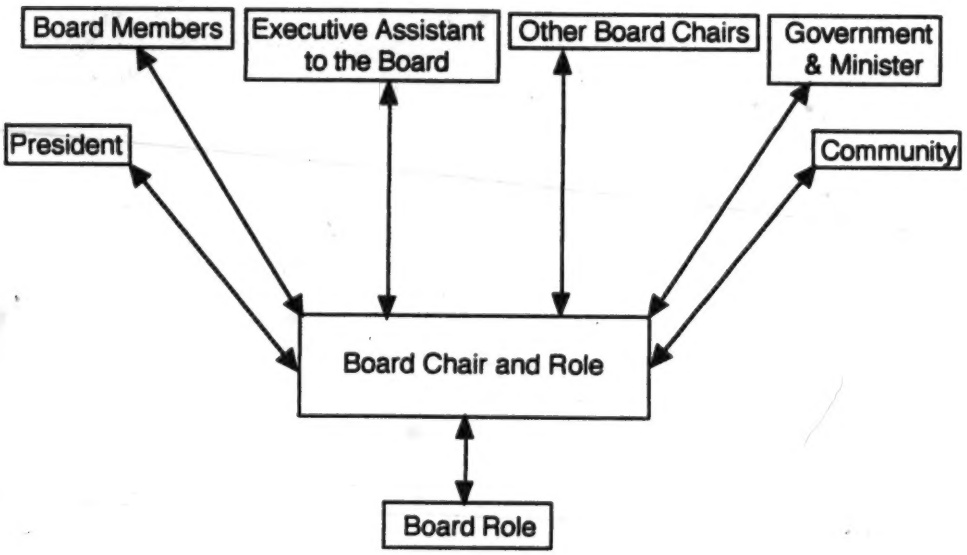

Figure 5.1 Expanded Conceptual Framework

documented and detailed specifically for the college but consistent with Ministerial documentation. The next symbol on top of the board role box is a two-way arrow which symbolizes a reciprocal relationship between the "board role" and the "board chair and role" located in a box above the "board role" box. How the board chair functions in this role is not only dependent on the board chair's personality and skills but also on the overall role of the board for the board chair's role is defined through the board role. Similarly the board role, which has been developed and defined by the board with a board chair leading and facilitating the process, cannot be carried out without the presence and influence of the board chair. As a result the board role and how this role is carried out is dependent on the "board chair and role." The two-way arrows

above the box with "board chair and role" in it symbolize reciprocal relationships among the board chair and the (a) president, (b) board members, (c) executive assistant to the board, (d) other board chairs, (e) Government and Minister, and (f) community. The nature of these relationships and their impact on the board chair were described in detail in the discussion of findings section in Chapter 4. The participants of this study highlighted the importance that these individuals have on the role of the board chair and in return the importance that board chairs have on them. These relationships discussed in the literature and findings of this study need to be strong, supportive, and reciprocal in nature in order to achieve successful college governance.

Personal Reflections

College governance is one area in particular which I have a keen interest in and the role of the board chair in Alberta public colleges was a specific role that I felt needed attention. The research that I undertook to complete this thesis "opened my eyes" in understanding and having a greater appreciation of board chairs in Alberta public college governing boards.

The undertaking and completion of this research study was a major aspect of my Master of Education program specializing in postsecondary administration. This allowed me the opportunity to visit three postsecondary public colleges in Alberta and interview three board chairs and two presidents in order to gain insight from their perspectives on the role of the board chair. In addition, I have been able to gain valuable insights through the existing literature on college board governance, and in particular, the board chair role. Although the literature is very limited on the role of the board chair, especially in

Alberta public colleges, the position description document, developed by the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development in 1994 on the role of the board chair, was extremely important and beneficial to this study.

The role of the board chair in Alberta public postsecondary colleges is an extremely responsible role which requires a very strong commitment with a keen sense of dedication. It is extremely important that the community realize that a board chair in an Alberta public postsecondary college, commits and dedicates a significant portion of their life serving in this role in a voluntary capacity with no monetary reward, and often work a full time job elsewhere. Board chairs bring with them an unparalleled expertise in board governance with a love for postsecondary education and I feel these individuals need to be appreciated more by community members. This might be accomplished by having a special week dedicated to board chairs of public governing colleges in Alberta. A special presentation in recognition of excellent leadership in board governance might be presented by the college and community leaders, at the end of this week, which would be acknowledged and signed by the Minister. This needed appreciation will be beneficial in order for current board chairs and future board chairs, to lead and provide effective board governance for a society that expects nothing less than excellence from its colleges.

I feel it is extremely important that previous board chairs, who feel they have been successful in this role, undertake the task of adding to the limited body of literature on the role of the board chair. By telling their stories on what it takes to be a successful board chair they will greatly benefit current board chairs in, and future board chairs to, this role. In addition, society will have a deeper understanding and appreciation for individuals who serve in this role!

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Appendix

Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

1. Introduction and Background Information of the Position (Interviewer introduces the nature of his study and the importance of the interviews and probes for background of the interviewees.).

    1.1. (For board chairs) How long have you been the board chair? What attracted you to the job? Would you accept an extension if there is one? Why? Why not?

    1.2. (For presidents) How long have you been president? How do you like your present job compared to that of the board chair? Would you want to be the board chair? Why? Why not?

2. Appointment

    2.1. Please tell me about the selection process of the board chair. Are you satisfied with the present method? Why? Why not?

    2.2. How do you think it can be improved?

    2.3. How long is the term of office for the board chair?

    2.4. What should be the proper length of the term served? Why?

3. Job Descriptions

    3.1. Where and how do board chairs learn their role?

    3.2. Are there job descriptions for the board chair at present?

    3.3. What do board chairs learn from the job description?

    3.4. How much do board members know about the job description and the role of the board chair?

    3.5. How about administrators within the college? How about significant community members outside the college?

    3.6. Do you think there is a need for job description revision?

How could the job description be improved?

4. Qualifications and Professional Development

    4.1. What do you think should be the qualifications of the board chair?

    4.2. How can we help those individuals who will become board chairs to be ready for the position and work more effectively?

    4.3. (If training be mentioned) When should the board chair have the training?

    4.4. What should the board chair be trained in?

5. Relationships

    5.1. What is the relationship between the board chair and the president? How important is this relationship?

    5.2. What is the relationship between the board chair and board members? How important is this relationship?

    5.3. What is the relationship between the board chair and members within the college? How important is this relationship?

    5.4. What is the relationship between the board chair and significant community members outside the college? How important is this relationship?

6. Time Frames

    6.1. How much time (hours per month) does the board chair spend with only the president of the college?

    6.2. How much time (hours per month) does the board chair spend with board members of the college?

    6.3. How much time (hours per month) does the board chair

spend with other members within the college?

6.4. How much time (hours per month) does the board chair spend with significant community members outside the college?

6.5. How much time (hours per month) does the board chair spend alone working in this position?

7. Suggestions

7.1. Please give any suggestions that you think will enhance the work of the board chair.

7.2. Do you have any concluding comments regarding the role of the board chair?

Curriculum Vitae

JAMES PATRICK RYAN

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

Awarded (June. 1998, University of Alberta) **MASTER OF EDUCATION WITH A SPECIALIZATION IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

Successfully defended (Jan. 1998, University of Alberta) **GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH THESIS -- THE ROLE OF THE BOARD CHAIR IN A PUBLIC COLLEGE**

Course requirements completed for the Master of Education Degree Program:

EDPS 601 -- **Supervised Individual Study I -- College Governance**
EDAL 512 -- **Research Design and Data Analysis II**
EDAL 511 -- **Research Design and Data Analysis I**
EDAL 594 -- **Seminar and Practicum in Administrative Behavior II**
EDAL 572 -- **Administration of Postsecondary Institutions**
EDAL 502 -- **Administrative and Leadership Processes in Education**
EDAL 571 -- **The Organization of Postsecondary Education**
EDAL 501 -- **Evolving Concepts in Educational Administration and Leadership**
EDPY 525 -- **Religious and Moral Development and Education**
EDAE 521 -- **Psychology of Learning and Teaching at the Adult Level**

Awarded (June,1990, University of Calgary) **BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

Awarded (Nov. 1986, University of Alberta) **BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH A MAJOR IN SOCIOLOGY -- PSYCHOLOGY**

Completed one year of course work (1980-81, N.A.I.T.) **BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

Awarded (June,1980, University of Alberta) **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE WITH A MAJOR IN BIOLOGY**

SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCE WITH AN EDUCATIONAL TEACHING COMPONENT

May,1992 to present: **CASE MANAGER -- SOCIAL WORKER** -- Provision of health management and health professional treatment services and health support services within the Edmonton Community Health Region.
Capital Health, Community Care and Public Health, Home Care -- Misericordia Community Health Centre and Hospital

Jan. 1991 to April, 1992: **SOCIAL WORKER** -- Provision of health counselling and support to a medically unstable caseload of income support clients.
Alberta Family and Social Services, Edmonton

Jan. 1990 to April, 1990: **MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY** -- Provision of health counselling and support service linkages to individuals and families with mental health problems.
Bachelor of Social Work practicum at Alberta Mental Health, St Albert

Sept. 1989 to Dec. 1989: **REHABILITATION SOCIAL WORK** -- Rehabilitate forensic patients through individual interviewing/counselling and group psychotherapy so they may return to the social community.
Bachelor of Social Work practicum at Alberta Hospital, Edmonton

Aug. 1986 to Dec. 1990: **REHABILITATION COUNSELLOR** --Provision of counselling and support to psychiatrically disturbed children, teens and their families.
Catholic Social Services, Edmonton

Aug. 1986 to Sept. 1988: **COMMUNITY YOUTH COUNSELLOR** -- Provision of contracted counselling services to several youths in the community.
Alberta Family and Social Services, Edmonton

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT -- SALES EXPERIENCE

June 1982 to Jan. 1991: **ASSISTANT PROPERTY MANAGER** -- Provision of a variety of management functions on a part time basis for approximately 100 rental units.
Cabhrel Holdings Ltd., Edmonton

Sept. 1982 to Feb. 1994: **SALES REPRESENTATIVE** -- Promotion and sales of liquor on a part time basis.
Alberta Liquor Control Board (Meadowlark), Edmonton

Sept. 1981 to May 1982 (contract position) : **SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE** -- Promotion of seat belt awareness through educational briefings and simulated demonstrations in Central and Northern Alberta.
Alberta Transportation Department (Safety Branch), Edmonton

June 1975 to Aug. 1981: **SALESMAN (SPORTS, PAINT, AND HARDWARE)** -- Market and sell departmental goods on a part time basis to prospective consumers --customers -- clients.
Sears (Kingsway), Edmonton

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, REGISTRATION, AND CERTIFICATION

ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS -- Member in good standing

HEALTH SCIENCES ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA -- Member in good standing

REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKER -- Alberta Association of Registered Social Workers

CASE MANAGER CERTIFICATION -- Designation Received From Capital Health, Community Care and Public Health, Home Care

CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION AND BASIC RESCUER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL COACHES CERTIFICATION PROGRAM, LEVEL I & II -- Canadian Amateur Hockey Association and its Branches, Hockey Development Council